MADAME LUCAS

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Round-Robin Series

Madame Lucas

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MADAME LUCAS.

CHAPTER I.

RUE QUI-SAIT, NO. 7.

O heavy lightness! serious vanity!

—Romeo and Juliet.

"UT per Passionem ejus et Crucem ad Resurrectionis gloriam perducamur," concluded the petition rather hurriedly, as the uprising figure scattered rosary and prayer-book from its white robes upon the wooden floor. "Enter!" cried the interrupted suppliant in answer to a discreet knock, skipping over the fallen emblems of devotion with less reverence than agility.

"Dear Eudoxie, how good you are to come to me so early! I have just finished prayers for this important morning; and see how the

sun gives me his congratulations! Give me yours too, *ma belle.*"

"With all my heart, Charlotte. The sunshine is a good omen for you. I peeped through the crack before knocking, and you haven't an idea what a picture it was! you looked like a saint in the stained-glass windows, all rose-colored with the light through the curtains."

"No, no: you mean like Princess Désirée at the Variétés! Even the advancing solemnities will fail to make a saint of me, my dear. I am always Charlotte. Come here, and let me see the bridesmaid's toilet."

The young girl who stepped before the tiny dressing-glass at this suggestion was arrayed in a significantly white costume, flowers in her hands, at her belt, in her black hair, with a profusion expressive of wedding festivities. She was of the most pronounced French type — short, plump, rather well-looking, with black eyes somewhat *à fleur de tête*, a lively, flickering glance, and a passionate yet timid physiognomy. The little tremor of excitement manifest in this young person betrayed that

the assumption of festal garments was an affair not very common in her experience; and there was a certain something in her relation to those garments that marked her plainly of the class *roturier*. In this respect, as in most others, she formed a strong contrast to the young girl whose devout occupation had ended so abruptly, and whom she addressed as Charlotte. The latter was of about the same age, but of a totally different type. Of medium size, with no very striking points of feature or color, she would not at a glance have been called remarkably beautiful, though possessed of a charming and rather kittenish face, lighted by warm, long-lashed, hazel eyes. But it was the wonderful expression hovering on this rounded face which gave it a particular interest. Its strongest attractions were its large, full eyelids, purpled by nature like the tinted lids of Eastern women; its deep-dimpled chin, and a frequent smile of infinite, childlike frankness and brilliancy. Her very speech differed from that of her companion: it was the pure French of the upper classes; and its refinement was more conspicuous by contrast with

Eudoxie's ordinary and not over-musical utterances.

Charlotte, like her visitor, wore a white costume, supplemented by a veil; but its simplicity showed nothing of the plebeian: on the contrary, she had somehow the air of a patrician dropped by mistake into a little apartment *au quatrième* over the clockmaker's shop of papa Pinel, rue Qui-sait, No. 7. For this insignificant little boudoir, though bearing evidence of some dainty hand concerned in its fitting-up, was far from being a luxurious retreat, after all. Two or three braided rugs tried hopelessly to cover the plain board floor. A small prie-dieu stood against the wall, surmounted by a wooden crucifix, and a gaudily-colored print of the Sacred Heart. There were flowers blooming in the two little windows, and a plaster-of-paris dove swung over them gayly, at the end of a string. On the window-seat, among the green things, nestled a small cat, by name Zouzou, blissfully sunning her striped coat. Curtains of coarse rose-colored netting were looped back from the window-frames, draped the toilet-stand, and softened the outlines of the ascetic-

looking little iron bedstead. The morning sun streamed graciously through, and made a rosy transformation of these furnishings, and of the great heaps of snow-white finery lying everywhere about. And it made a most amazing display of rainbow sparks and flashes on the tiny dressing-table, where certain caskets stood with open covers, looking as much out of place as the airy bridal figure in their homely surroundings.

But, strong as is the fascination of baubles for the feminine eye, mademoiselle Eudoxie found a still stronger charm in the vision looking at her from the mirror. She fluttered and shook out her gauzy frills with the intensest respect for that ornate reflection, forgetting to pay tribute of admiration to her friend's bridal offerings.

"Do you think I have flowers enough in my hair, Charlotte?" she inquired anxiously, eyeing the vast pile of braids and blossoms reflected in the looking-glass.

"Beyond a doubt," said Charlotte, promptly subduing a dimple in her brown cheek. "One leaf more would absolutely ruin the effect.

Did you see mamma as you came up, Eudoxie?"

"Oh, yes! and what a ravishing toilet! She is magnificent — a true empress, my child!"

"H'm!" said Charlotte, thinking rather dubiously of the costume which mamma Pinel's originality had called forth — an immense robe of figured satin, in which *jaune d'orange* predominated; a shower of questionable jewels; a marvel of frisettes for a head-dress, crowned by more floral devices than even Eudoxie had achieved. "And did you see papa as well?"

"Yes, indeed! in the finest spirits — and a superb white waistcoat — giving orders about the breakfast. Poor man, how sorry I am for him!"

"Why, pray?"

"Why, because he is to lose you, you know. It is such an affliction to him."

"Oh! I thought he appeared to be in the finest spirits. You observed at the same time that he looked afflicted?"

"Well, not so very, at that moment, to be sure; but it must have been the effect of the waistcoat, for he assured me he was in the extreme of dejection."

"He will spoil the waistcoat with his tears, if this dejection continues, *hein?* And mamma, was she also in despair?"

"*Pauvre chère dame!* yes; but she is seeking distraction in the pyramids of roses just arrived for the table, from monsieur Lucas. You are unfeeling, Charlotte! why do you laugh? have you no sympathy with the emotions of your dear parents?"

"Unbounded sympathy! I have been saying an Oremus for their benefit. Only just fancy how much worse they would feel if we were to have no wedding here to-day! But I thought there were flowers enough down stairs already. Does monsieur Lucas intend to smother us in them?"

"O Charlotte! How ungrateful! And how unlike you too; for only a little while since, all the flowers in Paris would hardly have satisfied you!"

"I have been overloaded with them lately," said the young girl, stretching out her arms with a weary little yawn: "and I tire of every thing very quickly; it is a fault of my constitution, dear child. For instance, I was tired

of this old routine of life; and that is not so strange, if you could comprehend my secret ambitions and interests, all hemmed in by the clock-cases down stairs. I wanted a change — a grand excitement: I want to travel. Monsieur Lucas will take me to his great house on the Faubourg: we will stay there until I am tired of that; and then I shall persuade him to shut it up, and go away on a grand tour to America."

"Oh, to America!" said Eudoxie, her eyes opening wide: "why do you want to go there? You will be eaten up by barbarians, or by the savage animals which are accustomed to promenade in the streets."

"Bah!" laughed Charlotte, rumpling her long brown hair against the pink curtains: "you don't know any thing, my stupid friend! Did you learn no better than that at madame Xavier's? and haven't you seen Americans enough in Paris to teach you that they are quite as civilized as we are? It is a great wide country, where people get very rich, and where everybody does just as he pleases. I always meant to go there some time, and I like the

language: that is why I have studied it so hard for the last few years. I can speak it now well enough to travel there. Oh, decidedly monsieur Lucas shall take me to America! Will you come with me, Eudoxie?"

"Go with you? You joke, my all-beautiful! And what should I do in your great wide country?"

"You should be my companion, look after the wardrobe — for I am to be very rich, you know, and must not be troubled with such little details; and you are no intellectual star, my poor Eudoxie. You make a good friend, and I want one such in my suite. Will you be my companion? Say yes! you have nobody to consult but your cross aunt Jacot, and I don't think she will make objections. You shall have money enough for all the head-dresses you want, and learn to speak English, and see the great world; and is there anybody more interested in your welfare than I am? say!"

"Indeed, I don't think so!" replied Eudoxie a little sadly, having forgotten all about the wedding and the dresses and the *coiffure*, and sinking down in a gauzy heap on the prie-dieu

to consider these immense propositions. "But it is very uncertain whether you will go, Charlotte."

"Ah! I mean to by and by, sooner or later. Hear the voices down stairs, and carriages stopping at the door! Look out, and see who they are, Eudoxie."

Down in the narrow street there is quite a blockade made by the several carriages, and all the windows of all the houses are occupied by heads of interested *rentiers* taking observations. A Barbary organ stationed across the way is playing "*Rossignolet des bois*" over and over again, the hunchbacked proprietor having forgotten to change the tune; the brown woman beside him, in short skirts and a capuchon, whose business it is to sing, stands mute, with open mouth, watching the white-dressed bridesmaids alight, and go up the steps. Squads of little street-children post themselves along the curbstone to admire, and exchange comments.

"I see two bridesmaids' dresses — it is Juliette and Barbara; and there is your uncle Silas with his earrings, like the old uncle in the '*Poudre aux yeux*,'" reported Eudoxie,

craning her head out between the curtains. "Hark! there is a crash down stairs. Pierre has dropped a basket of wine-bottles: I hear your father shouting at him. Poor Pierre! he shares in the general agitation. But you, Charlotte, you are the only one in the house who is tranquil. You don't seem in the least nervous."

"Why should I be nervous?" said the practical bride, placidly smoothing down her ruffled locks, and rearranging her veil. "On the contrary, I am well satisfied — because it is fine weather, and because my dressmaker has done excellently; and because — well, there is the third cause right under your eye in that velvet casket: see how it sparkles! You haven't given a glance to my newest present, Eudoxie."

"Ah!" said Eudoxie, with an awe-struck sigh, "what splendor! When did it come? is it from monsieur Lucas?"

"Precisely — from monsieur Lucas — it came two hours ago. I will wear it at the ceremony: the other ornaments not, because I do not mean to look very dazzling. There must not

be too sharp a contrast between little Charlotte of the rue Qui-sait, and madame Lucas, the millionnaire's wife," replied mademoiselle Pinel, lifting out a great chain of scintillating pendants, and putting it about her neck among the delicate shadows of point d'Alençon. It glinted there as naturally as though the smooth throat had never felt the clasp of a commoner circlet.

"How happy you are!" murmured the bridesmaid, with eyes full of pensive admiration. "And monsieur Lucas, what unexampled generosity! He is a noble man; most admirable. Tell me, Charlotte, did you ever observe that his eyes are a little — the least in the world — uneven?"

"It is not a serious defect: it did not hinder his selection of the jewels, my dear. See these bracelets; and this delightful butterfly of diamonds for the hair — in good taste, is it not?"

"Oh, magnificent! As you say, the defect is trifling. — I have sometimes thought it a pity that the nose of monsieur Lucas was of so pronounced a tint — the nose is such an important feature," pursued Eudoxie in cautious criticism.

"One must not be too exacting: that is a frequent peculiarity with men of his years, especially when they are rather heavy in figure; and he is not light — my worthy *futur!* 'Speak of the wolf' — Do you hear his footstep?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Eudoxie sentimentally: "how quick is the ear of affection! it detects the step of the beloved object at a distance of four stories, and among a crowd of others"—

"*Dame!* a step of three hundred pounds' weight accompanied by an iron-wood cane," observed Charlotte, with an expressive movement of her right shoulder. "I wonder if he has brought more flowers with him!"

A confusion of voices and laughter rose over the stairs, distinct among which was the heavy thump of an ascending cane, and the labored merriment of a hoarse, apoplectic voice.

"Eudoxie!" cried some one below.

"It is mamma calling," said Charlotte theatrically: "the hour approaches!"

"Eudoxie, they are asking for you in the *salon*," panted mamma Pinel, rustling her flowered skirts through the small doorway. "Ah,

my Charlotte! my beloved child! if you knew my feelings" —

Mamma Pinel's voice loses itself in the folds of her large and musky lace handkerchief.

"Do we need so much rehearsing, mamma?" says Charlotte coolly, taking a final glance over her shoulder at the little mirror. "Run, Eudoxie: we will follow directly."

"My child, the carriages are waiting, and monsieur Lucas is below," sobs mamma Pinel. "Are you ready, *mon ange?*"

"Quite ready. Good-by, Zouzou; good-by, poor little cat!"

The pink room is left alone in the sunlight; and the jewels lie flashing, unappreciated by Zouzou mewing in solitude on the window-seat. . . . . .

. . . . . .

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW WORLD.

They were trained together in their childhoods; and there rooted between them then such an affection, which cannot choose but branch now. —WINTER'S TALE.

A GREAT city is lying grandly on the borders of a great river: the myriad wheels and paddles of traffic are briskly cutting the bright waters. Great puffs of smoke burst upward from the manufactories spreading innumerable along the banks and in toward the city's heart; but even those dingy drifts cannot veil away all the deep-blue sky that spans with sturdy brightness this busy American bee-hive. Away from the riverside and toward the localities of lighter industries, among squares of gorgeous buildings where humanity wears fine raiment, and lounges generally instead of rushing, one breathes a different air: unhindered by smoke the sun smiles down broadly, and every-

thing looks fresh and distinct in this clear Western atmosphere.

"Clarens House" is the inscription cut in brown stone on the portico of one of these large buildings standing in a spot where humanity swarms thickest. At this hour of the day the long avenue running past it, always well filled with conveyances, is especially crowded, this being the usual time when select ladyhood "goes shopping."

At the lower windows of Clarens House — smoking-room windows apparently — numerous heads are stationed, dimly visible through the medium of Cuban incense-wreaths. One of the smokers has come out, and is relighting his cigarette on the steps, looking up and down the street with a calmly ruminative air. He seems a stranger in the place, running his eye quietly over the passing faces, and exchanging no recognition with any one. The neighboring buildings receive a share of his idle survey, as do likewise the knots of ladies with opera-glasses taking their elaborate way to a *matinée* near by. He has an appearance of partly expecting some one, but his patience is not at all

taxed by the delay: he whistles softly, not seeming in the least bored, and observing the passers with the same composed glance that never degenerates into a stare. He is not a dandified person, but carries his broad shoulders with a pleasant air of dignity, as one who may under no circumstances whatever be patronized. He has a fine, earnest face, and a pair of reflective gray eyes. The eyes are fixed in a mildly-speculative gaze on a very bright constellation of bonnets crossing the street, just as a long slim man in gray springs up the steps, and takes him warmly by the hand.

"Schouler! Wolf, my dear fellow, how are you?" cries the slim man heartily.

"Oh, here you are at last!" says the other, turning round with a bright face. "How are you, Baldwyn?"

"Well, very well. Tired of waiting? I only just received your card, and came as quickly as possible."

"I didn't mind waiting: I've been very well amused, thank you. You have a number of fine buildings around here."

"Rather."

"And you seem to have an uncommonly large number of fine-looking ladies around here too!"

"To be sure we have! We are noted for our beauties — didn't you know that? Eastern ladies are nothing to 'em! But tell me, æsthetic man, something about yourself immediately — when you reached here? what are your plans? how are your prospects? Come down off the steps, and let's hold converse sweet, as we used to do in the old university days."

"I got in on the morning-train from the East," said the other concisely: "my plans are unsettled, my prospects are veiled in mystery. When I find out any thing about them, I will impart it to you. My chief object in coming here was to see you a while, and improve my mind. If you would like to know what I have been doing since I landed in your blessed city" —

"I should" —

"It will not take long to tell it. I spent a couple of hours in detective business after some missent luggage. Then I found your publishers' office; and, as you were not there, I left

a card at your rooms, and came back here. I've been smoking ever since."

"And studying architecture, in bricks and bonnets! I see. Do you know how long it has been since I met you last, Schouler?"

"Let me see — that was in New-York State," said Schouler, "on the road to Albany. What was I going to do in Albany? I don't remember! It was only the year before that, that we spent three weeks together in New-York City. What a jolly time we had making reminiscences" —

"And punch," murmured Baldwyn, in parenthesis.

"Yes, and money too, out of that literary windfall of yours. But the reminiscences were jolliest. I say, Baldwyn, do you recollect that uncivilized scrimmage we had with the *polizei* at Halle? It wasn't my fault, either. I was thinking of that coming up in the train."

"You were in the thickest of it, old fellow."

"Well, it happened so. But you helped me out of that famously. You never were much of a fighter, Baldwyn; but when it came to getting your friends out of mischief — How

you ran me off in the dark, that night! I've often roared over the recollection since. I've got a sketch now somewhere, of my long-legged preserver shooting down the road with me dangling from his grasp, and old Jaeger plunging after us with a lantern. I should have been locked up if it hadn't been for you."

"You deserved it," languidly remarked the other. "As you say, I'm not a fighting character. Neither are you; but those were crazy times, and you were a high-spirited youngster."

"Do you know, Baldwyn, you haven't changed in the least? You actually look just the same as you did eight years ago, just as long and just as thin — yes, perhaps a trifle thinner. And not a day older, except for an increase of gravity, which is no improvement."

"Then you *don't* think," observed Baldwyn, with an air of whimsical melancholy, "that I grow more beautiful with advancing years! That disappoints me, because I know you never rated my personal charms very high in old times."

Baldwyn's face, however, was any thing but displeasing: it was a delicate, sharp face, refined

and rather cynical; a slight mustache scarcely hid the thin, curling lips; but most noticeable were the intensely bright and keen hazel eyes, so bright as to have something elfish in their look. He was, as his friend said, long and thin, saved from awkwardness by certain slow gentle ways made graceful with native courtliness. As they paced up and down together in front of Clarens House, it seemed that Baldwyn maintained something of a protective or fatherly air toward his younger companion, scarcely justified by the slight difference in their ages or by the wide-shouldered independence of the other, who might have been twenty seven or eight, and who looked still older. But this Mentor walked his Telemachus back and forth by the arm, looking down admonitory from his three inches of superior height.

"Now for these plans of yours" — said he with paternal briskness — "I must hear something concerning them. You are here on business, I imagine. Have you an intention of remaining during" —

"Oh, don't put me through a catechism now, my dear fellow, don't! I'm as stupid as an owl

after my wanderings, and the last thing I want to do is to talk about myself. Let's take a more amusing theme. *Your*self, for instance. What have you been writing lately? Any thing under way now?"

"A serial is — it's nearly done, though — it's for an Eastern paper. I've done a number of magazine articles lately, essays, and things of that nature. Yes, I have had my hands tolerably full."

"And how do you recreate yourself? Don't neglect that important duty, I hope? You go 'in the world,' as they say in France?"

"Oh, yes! I adorn society occasionally," said Baldwyn, putting his hands in his pockets: "the sort of society that you mean, that is. There are various kinds of society here, as in every other city. But there's a special circle that I'm interested in — the most charming imaginable — somewhat suggestive of Bohemia" —

"Why, you are no Bohemian, John: you are a born aristocrat, only good-nature tones you down a little."

"Well, but neither is this Bohemia whereof

I speak — it only borders on the Delectable Land — it more resembles Arcadia, where *I also — et cætera.*"

"Not Arcadia of reed pipes and 'silly sheep,' I dare say, but Arcadia with a little more polish — sort of indoor Watteau, eh?"

"Somehow so."

"Ah! I am curious. Tell me more of this land where you are lucky enough to have the *entrée.* Are the shepherds — and the shepherdesses — exclusive?"

"They are *beaux esprits*, some of them. They would let you in on my recommendation, no doubt. I do intend to introduce you there, joking aside; for you are made for that set, and will fit in to a charm. Only pray don't get up any romancing, that's a good fellow."

Baldwyn caught himself up here, as though he had spoken unadvisedly, and glanced sidewise at his friend. But Wolf did not seem to notice it, and answered lightly, "Why the warning? I won't promise until I have seen some of your fair Utopians. Are they very fascinating? Come, don't be so mysterious about it!"

"You are as inquisitive as ever, upon my word! Strange, now, that knocking about the world as you have hasn't knocked the curiosity out of you in the smallest degree! I want to surprise you with these new people, mind you. The surprise will be not so much in the people, to you who have seen everybody, as in finding them here, brought together in this unlikely corner of the world. Now, that was one of them — a lesser light — to whom I bowed a few minutes ago."

"What! that burly fellow going ahead like a ponderous comet?"

"Yes, with papers bristling out of all his pockets. That's a reviewer. He's a good friend of mine: chops me up — moderately — when I bring out an article."

"Oh! a newspaper man, is he?"

"Yes, and a clever one too."

"So *he's* an Arcadian. Substantial-looking shepherd, to be sure. Is he a specimen of your apocryphal friends?"

"Pshaw! they're every one different from the others, and every one has a history. That's a County Kildare man, only five years over.

I'll tell you more about him some time when I give you the series of biographies — well, by Jove, there she is now!"

Schouler looked up. A little carriage was going rapidly past, toward which his friend was leaning eagerly, and taking off his hat with an animated face. There was only visible through the carriage-window a flash of brilliant red, as from a bonnet-ribbon, and the movement of a small glove in salutation. Wolf took off his hat to the little glove with some interest, and began to ask questions.

"What *she?* Who was it, Baldwyn?"

"That, my dear fellow," said Baldwin, tossing away the end of his defunct cigar, "was the *queen of Arcadia.*"

CHAPTER III.

ENCHANTED PALACE, WITH A WIDE-AWAKE BEAUTY IN IT.

Seeing more harmony
In her bright eye
Than now you hear.

— LOVELACE.

WOLF SCHOULER was something of a sentimentalist. By this is not implied that he was given over to the posing and "gush" naturally suggested by that term. He was sentimental in a better meaning of the abused word. He carried within him beautiful ideals, and was attracted or repelled by realities according as they neared or receded from his private standard. A German mother had transmitted to him this sensitive temperament, as well as a certain good-natured loftiness of feeling and demeanor, which, to be sure, nobody seriously condemned, though it had been speci-

fied as approaching conceit. However, since the great Athenian allowed a certain degree of self-esteem to the make-up of his "perfect man," it may be assumed that young Schouler's character was merely in a fair way to perfection.

He was, in fact, a trifle proud of that superfine organization of his, and was pleasantly convinced of its resemblance to the young Goethe's, in the matter of keen sensitiveness to the Beautiful and the Not-beautiful.

But he was in no danger of being run away with by enthusiasms. After all, he was not what is called "a susceptible man:" he could generally appreciate and admire without losing his balance. Otherwise Baldwyn, who understood him well, knowing certain facts which made him cautious in his friend's behalf, would not have risked introducing him into a circle where he was sure of finding so much to awaken his interest. As it was, the elder gentleman — who, by the by, was far more *vorsichtig* with regard to the ways of others than with regard to his own — saw no reason why his well-balanced friend should not be admitted among these congenial beings.

So it happened on the second day of his presence in St. Leon, at an early hour of the forenoon, that Clarens House had the honor of emitting from its dark portals this quasi-exotic young man, in a very good humor with Baldwyn, who accompanied him, and quite ready to set forth in any direction with an agreeable goal in view. Baldwyn had appointed the sortie, but being rather freakishly disposed had not seen fit to mention their destination. He was in a discursive vein that morning; and held forth vigorously on a question of ethics over his "*côtelette aux fines herbes*," neglecting his coffee, and pursuing his argument even beyond the doorsteps. Schouler, who prided himself on his nonchalant bearing, would not compromise it by asking questions, but listened impassive for several blocks before permitting himself to say, incidentally, "We are bound for Arcadia, I suppose, are we?"

"Yes: and, by the way, we might as well drop that figure of speech now, for it's not adequate at all; it doesn't convey to your mind any idea of the place and people you are to see. Prepare to be astonished; for, when we cross

the charmed threshold, we enter an atmosphere — oh, it's as unlike any thing outside as possible!"

"For instance" —

"Well, for instance, she will insist upon filling her rooms with flowers to that extent that one can hardly breathe: it looks like a Petersburg house in winter."

"*She!* Pshaw! Who *is* she? Is it the red ribbons in the olive-colored coupé yesterday?"

"*La petite Charlotte,*" said Baldwyn, tranquilly polishing his eye-glass.

"You are familiar, whoever she is. A Frenchwoman, I presume, then?"

"Oh! I don't address her in that way, you will please to understand. Yes, she is a Frenchwoman. While we are on the way to her house, I might give you a bit of biography, if you would like to hear it."

"By all means! and begin by saying she is pretty, that's a good boy."

"I could do so with perfect justice, but you shall see for yourself. She will be known to you as madame Lucas."

"Do you mean that isn't her name?"

"Certainly not: I was only thinking of the *sobriquet* I applied to her just now, by which she is sometimes spoken of among privileged friends, always with the greatest respect in the world, and because of her being rather *mignonne*. She is madame Lucas."

"And monsieur Lucas"—

"*Requiescat!* He is defunct. As she told me when I first knew her, "He is dead in Paris it is four years." She speaks excellent English now."

"And what is she doing over here? Reduced circumstances?"

"Not at all. She lives charmingly. This is the story: Her father was—probably is—a clockmaker in an obscure corner of Paris. She was brought up like other French girls of that class, perhaps better than most in similar circumstances. She was ambitious, and very clever. They sent her to a convent school till she was sixteen; and she knew more than her teachers at the end of that time, thanks to her unbounded ambition, and the books which she picked up and devoured at odd moments.

She learned English then; making it, she tells me, one of her day-dreams to travel, and visit this country. At seventeen they married her to monsieur Lucas, a friend of her father's, and a hideous old fellow. But he was immensely rich: and her home was not suited to her; she had grown far beyond its possibilities. She fancied there was in this marriage an opening to a wider life in a larger world; and it reconciled her to the great owl of a husband, who was really very fond of her."

"He was considerate enough to take himself out of the way at once," put in Wolf sympathetically.

"Not for three years; but he was very good to her all the time, only wearying her with his stupid admiration. She was otherwise well off, but not happy, because not appreciated. Old Lucas was not in society, so she was barred out from it; and her brilliancy was wasting itself in shade."

"When he finally consented to remove himself?"

"Yes, finally; and they put him in Père-Lachaise, with great pomp and circumstance."

"I am really relieved for the poor woman," commented Wolf. "What did she do next?"

"Of course she found herself tremendously wealthy; and it seemed to her, she has often said, as though her life had just begun. She determined to cut adrift from all ties that held her to the old life, which was now like a sort of nightmare, and to begin the new one under new skies and among new people. There was a young girl in her small circle of friends whom she had known at school, and who had always been attached to her. She said to this girl, "Will you be my companion, and come to the new country with me?" The girl had no family to claim her; she was poor, and she was fond of Charlotte; she said yes. A respectable person who was once their school-mistress was secured for duenna, the lawyers were hurried up, the property was put in order, and the little party of *dames seules* started for the unknown land. You see, it's quite a long story."

"Well, I'm interested," said Wolf. "But how in conscience did they ever wander out here? That's what I should like to know."

"That's the odd part of it. I suggested once

that she might naturally have preferred New-York City as a residence: but no, she said — it reminded her too much of her old home; and she wanted a great change. She brought letters to some business men in New York, who had had dealings with her husband; and she put a large amount of money in their hands, to be invested for her while she made the long-desired tour through the States. That's about all there is of it: they came here in the course of their travels; she was delighted with the West, said there was something refreshing in the air and the people, and took a house on the spot."

"Does she mean to live here permanently?" inquired Wolf.

"Who can predict the movements of a woman like that, with a fortune in her hands, and French blood in her veins? But I think she will be contented here for a good while yet. Mademoiselle Renaut" —

"Is that the duenna?"

"No, the companion. She is a little lonesome here, I fancy: but one doesn't see much of her; she is very reserved, not speaking Eng-

lish easily. By the way, there she is — *votre serviteur*, mademoiselle," says Baldwyn, with a fine salutation. A young woman rather fancifully dressed, with large and uncertain black eyes, passes them by, responding timidly to Baldwyn's greeting.

"Out for a walk. She is a little *gauche*, the mademoiselle — doesn't assimilate readily. And here," said that gentleman, stopping at the gate whence mademoiselle Renaut had issued, "is the home of our heroine: 'Maison-de-Presles,' she calls it, after the lady who takes care of her. You see, it's a little toward the outskirts. She has a mania for gardens and flowers and all that: so here are quite elaborate grounds, and there is a small conservatory in back there."

It was a moderately large, low house, with rather the air of an out-of-town residence, standing well back from the street, and screened therefrom considerably by some trees and tall plants on either side the paved entrance-walk. As the two gentlemen passed between the nicely-kept grass-plats, and mounted the short ascent of steps, Wolf noticed that a

tiny water-jet was twinkling among the shrubbery, and that late flowers were still blooming there. It was a tardy autumn, and the air was yet very warm: the low windows were open, so that the striped curtains fluttered cheerfully; and between their gauzy folds some stranger-plants pushed forth their long, odd-looking leaves. The muffled tinkle of a guitar came from somewhere within. A pretty French cat, with tail like a plume, sidled forth from the vestibule, and cautiously inspected the visitors. Wolf put out his cane in friendly playfulness, but she turned and fled with an inimical *miaow.*

"Who's striking the light guitar, Baldwyn? Is it the last of the troubadours?" asked Wolf with a stagey air.

"It's young Fleury, I dare say," replied Baldwyn, ringing the bell: "he's a fixture here most of the time; and he's always twiddling his banjo and singing romances when anybody will listen to him. He would have made a good troubadour."

"I feel as if we were going to the theatre," observed Wolf, laughing. "Will the door be

opened by a lackey in livery? or by a little coffee-colored goblin in a striped turban?"

But the door was opened on the moment by a matter-of-fact-looking maid in a white cap. Madame Lucas was at home — would they please walk in? and Mr. Baldwyn would find her in the farther parlor.

It was rather dark in the hall from the closed blinds: there was a curious perfume hanging about, and faint sounds of voices and guitar-notes mingled from some inner room. Wolf stumbled a little in the obscurity; and recovering himself, brushed against some prickly plants that seemed to line the hall-way. The maid went before, and, drawing aside a thick curtain, introduced them to the long, light room beyond, whence a tremendous waft of flower-fragrance rushed out at them. Wolf thought he had never seen a more picturesque interior. The floor was a mosaic of dark woods, strewn with variegated skins: there was no unnecessary furniture, but some fanciful-looking chairs, low divans and little tables, and a piano in an archway at the end of the room. But the flowers — they were everywhere, heaped on man-

tels, filling the windows, blooming on stands along the walls; and vines were trained to run up and clasp the small paintings that glowed like jewels here and there upon the pale-green panels. A pink-and-white macaw swung solemnly in his gilt hoop between the floating silken window-draperies.

Two people occupied the room — a lady on a sofa, turning the pages of a magazine; and a young man near her, who was producing those tinkling sounds from a little guitar in his hands, and trying, without success, to engage the attention of his listless companion. The lady rose from her sofa with a pleased exclamation, tossing away her book; and came lightly down the room, holding out her hands to Baldwyn, and welcoming him with some gracious French words. As he presented his friend, she spoke immediately and almost as well in English, bringing them up the room to sit near her favorite lounging-place. The guitar-playing young man had observed the arrivals with not a very joyous expression, and had quietly withdrawn himself and his instrument by way of the curtained arch.

"My friend understands your language," said Baldwyn, "so you have the privilege of using it now if you choose."

"Ah, now!" said madame Lucas, shaking her head merrily at him, "you know I have disowned my old speech: when I am in America, I must do like the Americans; and I am flattered if you speak English with me. Do I not speak it well, Mr. Schouler — pretty well, *in the circumstances?*" she asked, with the simple anxiety of a child for commendation.

"*Under* the circumstances," replied Wolf, smiling, with a little bow, "which Mr. Baldwyn has related to me, I think you do speak it amazingly well."

"Ah, *under* — thank you! it is those idioms that I stumble at most: I catch easily the accent — but the idiom — *c'est affreux!* Do you know, this is what I like in you Americans — your frankness. Now, a Frenchman would not correct the mistake of a foreigner — not if he made a dozen, and the most fearful! It is a false idea of politeness. They used to tell me at home that the Americans had the manners of savages: it was the only way they

could interpret this *brusquerie* and naturalness."

"And to be equally frank," said Baldwyn, laughing, "you are a very exceptional Frenchwoman in being so outspoken; and I think with you that it is an admirable quality."

"Why, Baldwyn!" said Wolf, "I can't agree with you in that estimate of the French ladies. I have met a great many in a social way, and it always struck me that they indulged very freely in expressing their ideas. How is it, madame?"

"I will not criticise my countrywomen," said madame brightly. "And I don't know which of you may be right; for you have probably seen much more of Frenchwomen — I mean the women of society — than I. It was a very quiet life that I used to live in France. I was not made to live that life. Can you fancy how a nun would feel, escaped from a convent where they put her against her will?"

"Or the much-quoted bird escaped from his cage," suggested Baldwyn, glancing at the pink-and-white macaw.

"That bird is not fastened," said madame,

following his eye. "He has been trained to stay at home. I would not take away all his liberty, just because I knew what it meant to be in a cage. He is a stupid creature, but he has a pretty color. *Dagobert! Dagobert!*"

The bird crooked his neck attentively, and flapped down upon the piano, where he patrolled with dignity over the scattered music-sheets.

"He is not so stupid," observed Baldwyn, offering the bird a bonbon from his pocket: "I think he is inviting you to sing."

"Does madame sing?" Wolf asked with interest.

"What does madame not do?" returned Baldwyn gallantly. "She sketches, she embroiders, she collects bric-à-brac and pictures, she appreciates every form of art, she sings like a — like a bird" —

"You should hear my Dagobert sing, when he is in the mood!" interposed madame, laughing slyly: "it would make you careful with your compliments. Some time we will have a competition — Dagobert and I — and you shall hear what I can do. Mr. Schouler, your friend

pretends to have a great respect for my little accomplishments; but I think he goes away, and laughs at them afterwards, out of my sight."

"You don't believe that, so I will not trouble myself to deny it," Baldwyn remarked placidly, walking away to look at a tiny Diaz flaming in the embrace of a passion-flower.

"That is a great favorite with him, that picture," observed madame Lucas, looking after him. "I expect to miss it one day, and then I shall know well enough what has happened."

"It will have been consumed with its own fire," Baldwyn said over his shoulder. "Look at it, Wolf. Did you ever see a richer bit of canvas? It's a regular ruby!"

"Yes," said madame: "that is what I like. I must always have color, strong color, round about me. I want the vivid element in every thing — a picture, a costume, a fragrance — no matter what. You may think it is an uneducated taste, but I cannot educate it. I will not try. I should have been happy to live in the Orient, and indulge my color-madness."

Wolf had already noticed this barbaric fancy

of his hostess, but thought that it was tempered by good taste so as to be nothing more than effective. Without taking observations of her toilet, he was conscious of some particular brightness about it, which, in fact, was due to the heavy Etruscan jewelry that she wore — wide bands on her dimpled brown wrists, and large pendants hanging from her ears. There was a little scarf, or "rigolette," of gay cherry-color thrown around her neck over the light dress. The sun shone behind her as she sat, and made a sort of dazzle through her brown hair. Wolf was not sure whether it was the sun or the bright play of her face as she talked on, with her brilliant eyes flickering, and dimples dancing in her cheeks. Baldwyn sauntered back from his silent study of the picture, and asked her for a song. She had talked herself into a gay mood, and went readily to the piano.

"I must sing something *bruyant, entrainant,* then," she exclaimed, fluttering over her music. "Ah! you shall hear one of my Spanish songs: there are several that are my delight. *They* have color! Here is one like my little Diaz up there, full of sleeping fire."

And she began at once, with a little veiled accompaniment, imitating the sound of a mandolin. She had a delicious voice, small, very small, but full of sympathy; and she used it with the finest intelligence. Clearly her great natural talent had had some masterly shaping. The song was well suited to the voice. "Sleeping fire," indeed! A smothered, passionate spirit crept through it, flaring out at intervals, and ending at last in a fervent outbreak that made Dagobert balance apprehensively on his perch. Wolf, whose love of music, when stirred, swelled in his heart like *heimweh* for a lost paradise, was thoroughly excited, and came up to lean on the instrument, and ask enthusiastic questions.

"No," she said, "I have not studied very much. My voice was trained a little at the convent: we had a good teacher, an Italian. After my marriage I studied for two years with Duprez. It was almost my only pleasure: my success is owed to that, I suppose. You like the song?"

"Like it! It is bewildering!"

"It sounds well with a guitar accompani-

ment, as Fleury played it for you the other day," said Baldwyn.

"Yes, that is more appropriate: it gives a romantic effect. But Joseph is too devoted to his guitar: he is likely to bore you with it."

"*To bore* — observe the aptness of our hostess with essential anglicisms!" exclaimed Baldwyn. "By the way, our friend Fleury was not in a social mood this morning: I noticed that he retired upon our arrival. And it is time now that we should follow his example; but first let me beg for one more song in behalf of this amateur, who is wild to hear you again."

"Does madame sing any German songs?" Wolf ventured to ask eagerly.

"No," said she, looking up regretfully, "I do not. I am very sorry. Is monsieur a German? I think it shows in his face."

"Not wholly so," Wolf answered. "My mother was. I was born in America. But it is my regret that I cannot call Germany my native land as well as Fatherland. I have lived there, and its music is very dear to me."

"I am sorry I cannot sing any of it," madame said again. And added ingenuously, "I will try and learn some."

"But I like French and Spanish songs too," said Wolf, turning over the disordered sheets. And she began to sing again, something of Gounod's this time, in a little clear voice as refreshing as the spring breeze it invoked. They cried "*brava!*" when it was done; and Wolf would have prayed for more, if he had dared: but Baldwyn led him off like a *gendarme*, resisting the bright lady's urgency with reference to "breakfast," and accepting her invitation to an early reunion of their small coterie.

"Well, sir," he inquired, marching Telemachus between the tropical trees again, "what do you think of it?"

"I do, indeed!" Telemachus made answer, with a hazy look in his eye.

"What has unsettled you? Was it the Spanish song? I hope it's not the *diablesse* of the shining one. Tell me what you think of her, *en somme*."

"I think," says Wolf with gravity, "that she is a very amazing Frenchwoman."

"Well, I told you so, you know. Really, she approaches the incredible, when you come to think of it. Her acquirements, and all that

— her early disadvantages — and she is so young too — we should speak of her as a "girl," if she were not a widow. Isn't she picturesque? such a fine color!"

"I didn't notice that she was any particular color," said Wolf, stopping to light a cigar as a sort of restorative. "She struck me as being of a uniform brownish tint, but what you might call luminous, like a lighted transparency, if you wished to be ornate. One wonders if it's any thing of a glow-worm nature, that will shine in the dark. It might have been the jewelry, or the sun, or the red thing round her neck; but I thought the general effect was rather dazzling. Perhaps it was the eyes — she has light-hazel eyes, hasn't she? to match her complexion. Isn't it rather a pity that she has such a taste for loud ornaments?"

"It's the only visible trace of her *bourgeois* origin. You acknowledge that it becomes her?"

"Oh, unquestionably! I never saw a woman before who could wear earrings a foot long without reminding you of the sign of three golden balls. — What did you call that cross-

looking young fellow with the tremendous black eyes?"

"Fleury? He's a Frenchman that happened to meet her in New York, and consequently followed on when she came here to live. He's really quite talented in his line, has become one of our local musicians, and has a good position in a church. He gives a few lessons, but I fancy his pupils don't find him very devoted. All his leisure time is spent in the vicinity of madame Lucas's piano. She took some notice of him at first, out of regard for his nationality; and his gratitude for the attention has become an unlimited bore. She is very good-natured about it, though. She thinks he comes mostly to amuse Miss Eudoxie."

"You believe that, do you?" said Wolf, with a humorous look.

"Oh, yes! She is surprisingly unconscious: didn't you observe it? And not the least bit of a coquette."

"*So!*"

"She's not, I assure you. Why, you can't have taken that impression! You didn't see any such symptoms in her manner this morning?"

"Indeed I didn't! You don't suppose she would ticket herself! It's a very harmless siren that shows her hand deliberately (I beg her pardon). She possesses the most refined form of the accomplishment — art concealing art, don't you know? What, Baldwyn! you are a regular wizard in general; and do I find you setting up your fetich of simplicity in the guise of a pretty Frenchwoman with heart-rending dimples? Heavens! Is this the cynic of my boyhood? the mind-dissector? the fellow that we at Halle used to nick-name monsieur Arouet? Must I say "*tempi passati!*" old chap? or is it only this one lady who seems to show you a perpendicular conscience?"

"You should know that I could not enjoy her society otherwise," said Baldwyn rather stiffly. "I am afraid you were prejudiced by hearing me speak of her previously with a — with a want of ceremony" —

"Not at all, not at all, old fellow!" returned the other. But he discussed the point no further, and seemed hugely amused at some inward observation. "Her voice is charming."

"Singing voice or speaking voice?"

"Both. When she talks, you are reminded of velvet: when she sings" —

"Let us have an original comparison this time."

"By all means. When she sings, it is as the rippling brook, or the chime of silver bells."

"Bah! not poetical enough. Why not say it is as the jingle of forks and wine-glasses at the jocund hour of one?"

They were passing the open windows of Clarens House dining-hall; and seductive odors, and sounds as of flying corks, rose to the street.

"Are you going in to lunch now?" asked Baldwyn, as they paused on the steps.

"No — yes, I suppose so. But I haven't any appetite," said Schouler, heaving a melodramatic sigh. "I left it behind among the cactuses and things. Why did you insist on refusing the *petit déjeûner*, you miscreant?"

CHAPTER IV.

CONTAINING A LITTLE SYNOPSIS.

A vigorous, various, versatile mind.
—OWEN MEREDITH.

THERE was, in fact, a great contrast between "little Charlotte Pinel of the rue Qui-sait," and "madame Lucas the millionnaire's widow."

In those old days her nature wore different aspects from the present equable one that invested her with so great a charm. The constant rebellion of fine instincts against inexorable surroundings, the disappointment of many ambitions, the impatient dwelling on some veiled ideal, had fostered a reserve, an occasional sharpness in the temper which now seemed so supremely amiable. It was more than the ordinary romantic aspirations common to universal girlhood that used to vex this fettered fancy. She was conscious of powers

that should give her supremacy in a yet unvisited sphere. Pupa was prescient of imago. And now that restraint was removed, and ambition free to make its way, her whole temper seemed to have changed: one could not believe that this purring, well-disposed kitten was ever moved to use its possible claws. Her very sarcasms — for she did sometimes indulge in such — were modified by conciliating dimples; and any vexatious mishaps she made the best of, with only a passing pout and shrug. She petted Eudoxie — poor Eudoxie, whose great eyes had been overflowing with tears ever since they came to St. Leon. She managed to make madame de Presles, her housekeeper and friend, so happy that the grateful soul forgot to be homesick in the strange land, and was devotedly watchful of Charlotte and the household in return. No one ever came in contact with the olive-skinned little Parisian, without feeling the charm of her gayly-dominant presence; and no woman of her acquaintance but tried to make a pet of her, so far as the dignity of her widowhood would permit. And it may be mentioned, as a little peculiarity of Charlotte's, that she

never rested while there was a creature within her reach that failed to respond in some kind to her winsomeness.

Baldwyn betook himself next day to the fragrant parlors again, anxious to learn the impression left there by his newly-presented friend. As he went in, he had a glimpse of mademoiselle Renaut dissolved in tears in a distant corner; but that melancholy vision retired as the portière closed behind him, and was presently replaced by the cheerier one of Charlotte, with Dagobert sitting haughtily on her shoulder.

"Ah, Mr. Baldwyn!" she cried at once in French, "how I thank you for bringing me such a delightful visit! And your friend, he is charming, ah, charming! He is of an intelligence — truly, he will be an acquisition. How our circle will be pleased with him!"

"I am glad he has gained your approval," answered Baldwyn; "but, if I had not been sure of it beforehand, I should not have presumed to bring him. He is a rare specimen, my dear lady. I know your distaste for commonplace mankind."

"Which you share, sir. But thank you,

again. Sit down, and tell me something of him. What savage name was that you called him by?"

"Wolf — contraction of Wolfram or Wolfert, or some such peculiar name. It was his mother's fancy, I suppose — a bit of German romanticism."

"It puts one in mind of an old epic hero," observed this well-read Frenchwoman.

"Yes; and in that particular is not inappropriate to him. You'll find that he has a strong likeness to some of those ancient Teutons; and yet, at the same time, he is a very modern Saxon. I think there's a constant struggle going on between the practical Saxon and the vein of German sentiment in him. The former generally conquers, in appearance, for he hates any thing like *effusion;* but the poetic mixture is soon revealed on acquaintance."

"An interesting compound, my faith!" commented Charlotte, disembarrassing herself from the feathered weight on her shoulder. "*Saute, Dagobert!* — Your monsieur Wolf seems to possess the greatest variety of tastes. Is he also a literary person?"

"Not by profession. Come here, King Dagobert! Would your highness accept a sugar-plum? No, he's not actively literary; but he reads. He is quite eclectic in the matter of reading; though he rather inclines, on the whole, to the mystic and Bulwer-y sort. He dabbles in the philosophies a little; is touched with Schopenhauer; and takes a tender interest in monkeys, in view of possible family ties of early date."

"Ah?" Charlotte did not know much about Schopenhauer; but she had read the "Descent of Man," and approved it because it made her laugh. Philosophies and sciences were not much to her taste: indeed, the only science she ever interested herself about was Palmistry, which possessed the merit of being savagely tabooed at the convent school.

"Of course," said Baldwyn, going on with his abstract, "he is very familiar with German authors; reveres Goethe and Lessing, and is an insane worshipper of Jean Paul, whom he's incessantly quoting. He's fond of quoting. You'll find him an entertaining talker when he's in the humor, which is almost always. A

few people, you know, have such universality of taste that they can talk cleverly on almost any subject; and he is one of those few. But when you touch him with music, you stir the depths. You have seen how music-wild he is."

"Ah, yes! it is worth while singing to such a listener. And he — does he never sing? he must, with that splendid physique and those great dreamy eyes!"

"Oh! he will surprise you some time with an unexpected ballad or serenade; but if you ask him now, he will say he does not sing."

"Why, pray? and what incantation will make him find his voice?"

"His voice has been slightly trained: it goes by nature. Only chance will bring it out, but you will be sure to hear it some time. And you will like it very much; for it has a peculiar quality — I might call it the *bouquet* — corresponding to a certain element in his own composition."

"I like to hear you talk about your friends, Mr. Baldwyn," said Charlotte, with her good-humored smile; "you get into such a fine enthusiasm over them. It is remarkable in a

person who seems at first glance rather phlegmatic."

"Are you laughing at me?" Baldwyn asked, looking a little annoyed. "But you don't laugh at him, and that is more important. You appreciate him, as I intended. It will be an acquaintance that cannot fail to improve both of you."

"Your great hobby — improvement! You don't think you are very impolite to signify that I need improvement? Madame de Presles, my dear, come and listen to *les impertinences de monsieur Baldwyn!*"

Madame de Presles had just come in from her walk, and presented herself, prim and pleasant, in her Quakerish little toilet. She was a small and sallow person, black-haired, thin-cheeked, with solemn dark eyes, great seriousness of expression, retiring manner, and an excellent accent. She was of ancient family, and cherished feelings of superiority founded on some old chronicles and an illegible seal handed down from her maternal ancestry. She made a salutation of old-fashioned courtesy to Mr. Baldwyn, with the serious cast of her face un-

changed. Charlotte was the only one who could call up a smile of any magnitude on her grave and introspective features. Nevertheless, she had quite a liking for Baldwyn, though she seldom talked with him to any extent; only listened quietly over her *tricot* to his easy and nicely-turned French. She could not be got to speak English, but insisted that its frightful difficulty was insurmountable by a person of her years.

"Madame will not believe me guilty of wilful impertinence, I am sure," said Baldwyn, bowing. "But let me apologize instantly for the appearance of rudeness. Do you pardon me, madame my hostess? And now tell me, my dear madame de Presles, how is your health? and are you still contented in this America of ours?"

Madame was contented: one could not be otherwise with a so dear and kind companion, and in a so pleasant household! If it were not for mademoiselle Renaut's *mal de pays* —

"Ah, that poor Eudoxie!" broke in Charlotte. "I am very near losing patience with her sometimes, when she weeps — weeps, and tor-

ments herself without ceasing — how tiresome it is!"

"It seems unreasonable," Baldwyn said; "but it is a terrible feeling, this homesickness! I can remember a touch of it once, when I was a young fellow. It has always surprised me that you are so entirely free from the malady. Are you sure you never felt it in the least?"

"Oh, sure!" Charlotte answered brightly. "Why should I be homesick? What have I to regret in the Old World? Do I look as though I regretted any thing?"

And she glided away from them to her piano, and trilled and chirruped one of her favorite songs about larks and forests and summer-winds; and there certainly was no regret in that gay, dimpled face, and those unshadowed hazel eyes. It was pleasant to see madame de Presles' sober countenance brighten at the flashing of the gleeful notes. All his life Baldwyn carried in memory the picture of the long, sunlighted room, and the singing figure with upturned face — never clouded, never less fair and radiant than now.

CHAPTER V.

MR. FLEURY ACCEPTS A CONFIDANTE.

It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock
The meat it feeds on.—

MR. BALDWYN was incorrect in his statement concerning the first acquaintance of madame Lucas and her guitar-playing devotee. Joseph Fleury had been a playmate of hers in the rue Qui-sait, when he was a very small and romantic boy with huge dark eyes, a year or two younger than pretty little Charlotte. Later, they met but rarely; and Joseph's susceptibility was much injured by the sweet but sadly indifferent gaze of the clockmaker's daughter.

Fleury *father* was cornet in a second-rate band; and glad enough he was to discover and encourage a strong musical bent in the small Joseph, which promised to result in something even better than a cornet by and by. The boy,

who was wayward, nervous, and unstable in general, was ardent enough at his musical studies, and went ahead amazingly; till, before his father realized it, Master Joseph had several pupils, and was becoming very tired of the rue Qui-sait. And, in the year of Charlotte's advancement to the great house on the Faubourg, young Fleury put together his small effects, and sailed for America, with his sentimental head full of visions which his great eyes very frankly betrayed. He had better success, however, than waits upon most visionaries: he found friends and pupils, and, before very long, stepped into a good position as choir-master at the church of St. Apollonia, One Thousand and Ninety-seventh Street. Life in the rue Qui-sait had not taught him luxurious habits: so he lived in a free-and-easy, gypsyish way, saved his money, and thought of Béranger as he made his neat little toilet before a very limited glass, in a limited apartment, ever so many stories up in the air.

One day, strolling past a certain hotel with his music-books under his arm, he came full upon Charlotte Pinel, dressed in mourning, and

looking more fatally pretty than ever. They recognized each other at the same moment.

"Charlotte!"

"*Tiens, c'est Joseph!*" she cried, flinging out her hands in delight. However well she already spoke English, it was a grateful sound to her ear, this accent of her native city, among the unmusical Saxon utterances; and Joseph had no need to fret at the manner of her recognition. The old charm began to work again, as in the rue Qui-sait, but with a new force; and young Fleury found himself, or rather lost himself, in a net of dreams, so completely ignoring *feu monsieur Lucas* as to be devoid of the slightest jealousy on account of his past usurpations. Charlotte and her ladies-of-honor were glad of their young countryman's society, and did not think of discouraging his shadow-like attendance upon their goings and comings: on the contrary, he was flattered with a familiar welcome as often as he appeared in their hotel-parlor.

When the trio struck their tent, and departed toward the setting sun, he deserted St. Apollonia instantaneously, and followed in their

steps; and no sooner were they well domiciled in St. Leon than he arrived smiling, with such a radiant certainty of being expected, that madame Charlotte experienced her first misgivings in connection with this tireless zeal. Fleury found his musical level in St. Leon at once, and plenty to do there: his only difficulty lay in so doing it as to admit of his spending three-quarters of his time in madame Lucas's drawing-room. Naturally, the business engagements suffered; but Fleury was well satisfied. His pleasant tenor voice sounded well with Charlotte's piano, and she liked his Spanish and Italian ditties. Indeed, it was at her suggestion that he had procured and learned to tinkle the little mandolin, which was a charming and appropriate accompaniment, to be sure, but which afterwards proved so exceedingly much of a good thing.

As for Eudoxie, she never had enough of his music; that was Charlotte's compensation: and it really was a relief to see the homesick, rueful face settle into temporary content under an opiate of Mattei or Gordigiani.

So long as the young troubadour had it all

to himself, which was during the several weeks following their establishment in St. Leon, he was a good-natured fellow enough: he was even a delightful one. He was rather shallow, it is true, in many respects; but he had the French sparkle and *verve*, and was of a somewhat dramatic turn. He revelled in the traditions of the French stage, and liked to read Charlotte the plays of Delavigne and Hugo, her favorite dramatists. But when, as naturally came to pass, that pretty foreign lady began to make acquaintances in the city, and to receive some chosen ones within her exclusive doorway, Master Joseph woke to a sense of his waning importance. There was less room for him frequently at the piano, fewer opportunities for his songs: uninterrupted days became rare, and madame Lucas was apt to be pre-occupied if he essayed reading. There were no more of those long, delightful afternoons when Charlotte, wearied by a morning's shopping, lounged peacefully on her sofa with a bit of embroidery; and the late sun dazzled on the polished floor, and air from the courtyard swept in through the lowered windows to cool the

white heat of his madrigals. Madame de Presles, knitting at the other end of the long room, and Eudoxie, shadowed by curtains in the alcove, were of no more consequence, at those times, than the stray fly or two settled on the ceiling. Afternoons to be remembered! If he had only been a little more like Béranger, he could have put them into verse.

But it was a fact, and not at all singular, that the new establishment had roused quite an interest in the "upper strata" of the St. Leonites. A widowed foreigner, charming, accomplished, attended by a retinue of companions and servants — so it was reported — enormously rich, and showing the greatest taste and refinement in her surroundings, speaking English surprisingly well — here was a windfall for society, they all felt. Plenty of overtures were made to madame Charlotte; and she used her discretion in receiving them, being guided in her choice of acquaintances at first by policy, afterwards by inclination. Of all things she disliked commonplace people — the vapid, conventional, finely-dressed material that enters so largely into the "upper

strata" everywhere. A graduate from the blessed school of *savoir faire*, she could wear a graceful semblance of co-interest when obliged to endure the society of these brilliant puppets; but her delicate and ambitious intelligence would not content itself within such tiresome boundaries. Here and there she met some congenial dispositions; but they were pretty sure to be found outside the ranks of rich pleasure-seekers, and commonly had some profession or aim in life. As soon as her position was acknowledged, therefore, she made use of her independence, and formed her own clique, choosing its members without regard to social or pecuniary standing.

"I can afford to snub Society now," she used to say, with her pretty head thrown up very loftily. "So also can my friends."

Nobody questioned it, nor ever thought of calling her presuming. She might have led Society about like a poodle, if she had chosen. But she did not. She chose to neglect the puppet-majority of her aristocratic acquaintance, and held a sort of perpetual *salon* for the few elect, who represented among them-

selves, modestly enough, art, literature, music, and even, as honest Warrington calls it, "the corporation of the goose-quill." Little Charlotte of the rue Qui-sait had in her the stuff on which the Hotel Rambouillet flourished: she might, in favoring circumstances, have gathered about her a circle like the magnetic Récamier's, or Juliette Lamber's of eighteen hundred and eighty.

Much as she enjoyed this state of things, it was, however, very little to the fancy of the romantic Joseph. He looked impatiently on all the ladies who came to visit Charlotte, fumed in secret at all the children she chatted with, and scowled fiendishly at all the gentlemen. Charlotte, who gave herself little trouble about Master Fleury's symptoms, was amused at first, and afterwards slightly mortified, until the young man took the notion of keeping sulkily in the background. Eudoxie, at least, was always ready for his songs, though they somehow lacked expression when Charlotte was not by.

Eudoxie was sitting alone one rainy morning in the little library, sewing, with a very pensive

face, when Joseph walked in, and stood looking discontentedly at her.

"Where is madame Lucas?" he inquired grimly.

"She is gone out."

"Gone out! in the rain — *que diable!* — where, pray?"

"Oh! she will not get wet: they had the *coupé.* It was to look at a picture at Mrs. Lake's studio that is to be sent away to-day, and they were anxious to see it first."

"They! who *they?* Somebody was with her?"

"Only monsieur Baldwyn, Joseph. Don't look so savage!"

"Always that Baldwyn. Bah! I tell you, Eudoxie, he disagrees with me," growled Joseph, throwing himself into a chair, and talking between his teeth in a highly unpleasant manner. "The insolent! I should like to carry him home to my room, and drop him out of the window! It is five stories high — aha-a-a! I'll wager that his own is no nearer the *entresol,* in spite of his detestable air of conceit. The lean, arrogant bore!"

And Joseph made some supplementary re-

marks with reference to Mr. Baldwyn, which poor Eudoxie pretended not to hear.

"Oh come, Joseph, never mind him! Be amiable, and sing me something. Have you brought your guitar to-day?"

"Sing? *Diable!* I'm not in the humor. I'll go home and cool off. You are a good girl, though, Eudoxie. I don't mean to be cross, you know; but that man — he infuriates me!"

Joseph could hardly help feeling some compunction as he considered the simple, kindly-natured girl, and her longing for the meagre conditions of her aunt's little house in Paris which she called home. He was flattered by her honest admiration of his one accomplishment, and much softened as he thought of the consolation it gave to her home-sick spirit.

"I wish you could forget Paris a little, Eudoxie," he said, mingling admonition with sympathy. "You think of it from morning till night, and it's a very bad practice. *Je vous demande un peu* — what's the use? Just try forgetting it, for a while."

"But I don't want to forget it. That dear old rue Qui-sait and good Father Hilaire — how

I miss him at confession! And aunt Jacot — it's true she doesn't smile continually, but I would take a scolding this minute if I could see her again. And the children of Jeanne Marcou on the third floor, what a festival they would make if I should go in to see them to-night with a bag of nut-cakes! *Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* it's no use to fancy that, truly. But to forget Paris — O Joseph!" sighed Eudoxie, dwelling on her woe with the perversity of the nostalgiac.

"After all, she's only a simpleton," Joseph said to himself impatiently. The simpleton had real, pathetic tears in her eyes; but then, the eyes were not very pretty, being, as before mentioned, quite *à fleur de crâne.* And besides, sympathy will not live very long by the side of jealousy.

"Well, don't cry about it, at any rate. You'll go back, you know, one of these days," said Joseph, walking up and down with a perturbed gait, and suddenly transferring his interest to the clock over the fireplace.

"Nearly one!" he exclaimed, his face lowering again. "Long past your breakfast-hour!

Doesn't she intend to return to breakfast? or can she be so delightfully occupied with pictures as to require none?"

The feminine pronoun plainly denoting madame Lucas, Eudoxie meekly replied that she was expected at one, and that breakfast had been deferred till her arrival, unless she and her companion should be entertained at their friend's studio. This possibility arose before Joseph in so unpleasant a light as to induce another *sotto voce* commentary on the innocent Baldwyn, which again mademoiselle Renaut seemed not to hear. Poor Eudoxie! the momentary interest of this fiery fellow, unusual enough to her, was a garden-spot in the desert of homesickness; but it wilted down hopelessly at the entrance of that little feminine pronoun, and the absorbing question of madame Lucas's breakfast. She *had* thought, now and then, that Joseph liked her a little, had fancied that he took some occasional pains to amuse her; and the fancy was sufficient to set astir the weak sentiment which abounded in her harmless brain. She was rather afraid of Charlotte's new acquaintances — the clever, accomplished

ladies, the fine gentlemen, some of them elegant, all of them "intellectual," all on a plane very high above her head. She was glad they took so little notice of her in general, as a meek piece of domestic machinery not adapted to social intercourse. Joseph Fleury was a well-looking fellow enough, and the fact of his having rather a theatrical air did not lessen his attractions in the eyes of Eudoxie. And then, he was from Paris. There was every reason why she should make a hero of Joseph, and she did.

But it had become impossible not to see that the hero was ruining his temper and damaging his complexion by accesses of frantic jealousy; and not at all on Eudoxie's account, but on that of her patroness and best friend, her dear Charlotte. She was too sensible of Charlotte's generosity to dislike her for this vexing fact; but she could not help reflecting with a little bitterness that all the gifts of love, fortune, advancement, beauty, and cleverness had been assigned to her old schoolmate, who was of no more worldly consequence than herself six years before. A brighter star, she was sure,

wrought on Charlotte's destiny; and she herself was doomed to be perpetually dull, timid, unadmired. Poor Eudoxie!— But here was Joseph fuming and striding about, and distracting her attention from her own woes; and indeed she began to feel rather sorry for his discomfort. She was getting to see ways in which she might have some understanding with him, and that would be much better than nothing.

"Joseph," she said, stammering a little, and growing appalled as he looked round at her.

"*Eh bien?*" he returned, in no very inviting tone.

"I do wish you would not get so excited. I —I don't think she cares any thing at all for Mr. Baldwyn, Joseph."

The reception of this well-meant speech was not reassuring.

"And who ever supposed that she did?" said Joseph, with the vicious suddenness of a fire-cracker. "Care for *him!* At least she has better taste than that. Don't be ridiculous, Eudoxie!"

But in the course of a minute or so he sat

down again, reflectively pushing up his hair, and asked, with some abatement of gruffness, "What makes you think so, Eudoxie?"

"Oh!" she replied, much gratified by this sign of reciprocity, "I can tell. One can see plainly. Why, as to that, nothing could be more evident!"

"But how — how? It's not at all evident to me: on the contrary. What are your reasons for thinking so?"

"Well, in the first place, she is so much at ease with him; she treats him so familiarly; she is never constrained nor nervous, as she would be sometimes, do you see, if she were very fond of him. And think how often she goes out with him, and how much pleasure she shows in his society!"

"Ah!" groaned Joseph, receiving this diagnosis with a bewildered stare: "you consider that a proof of indifference? Well, in that case I ought to feel encouraged — very much encouraged!"

But apparently Eudoxie's theory did not coincide with his impressions of a lady's probable behavior under the circumstances suggested.

The new-made confidante, however, felt bound to maintain her case, and to give all the consolation in her power.

"Yes, Joseph," she proceeded with more decision; "if you were in my place, you would see it differently" — ("I believe you!" murmured the gloomy listener) — "and you would understand that she would be more careful about showing a preference if — if she had any."

This lucid reasoning was less acceptable to Joseph than to the confidante, and he sighed angrily as he plunged his head between his clutching hands again.

"I never should have liked the man in any circumstances," he grumbled indistinctly; "a fellow who pretends to know so much, and gives himself lofty airs because he has been round the world. And I can't endure to see a man pique himself on talking a language well so that he has to parade it constantly in one's face!"

"Why, Joseph!" said Eudoxie in meek surprise, "I'm sure he does speak it as well as his own — I have heard you say so; and you

know he uses it with us out of politeness. I don't think it can be called affectation, when it is just as easy for him as it is for us."

"*Bon!*" growled the amiable Joseph: "there you go, taking his part! You'll be admiring him next. He practises witchcraft, it's very evident. — Listen — is that some one coming in?"

The sound of arriving voices came muffled through the portière; a flapping as of moistened umbrellas, and madame de Presles' mild tones putting solicitous questions; a little outbreak of soft laughter, and a masculine voice speaking lazily; the *frou-frou* of a dress in the passage-way, and presently the entrance of the arrivals, still carrying on a gay debate, into the long music-room behind the curtains.

"Will you go in, Joseph?" asked Eudoxie timidly, starting to join them. "We shall have breakfast now, I suppose."

Joseph followed her, looking as complaisant as one of Salvator Rosa's brigands, and presented himself on the other side of the curtain with about as much grace as might be displayed by one of those gentlemen in the flesh. Mr.

Baldwyn, unconscious of the recent aspersions upon his character, raised his tall figure from a comfortable divan, and uttered the proper salutations with as friendly an accent as could be expected. The grave politeness of his manner was such as even Salvator's brigand could not have withstood, and the greeting was returned civilly if not warmly. Charlotte stood resting against the piano, pulling off her gloves, with a merry eye turned upon her sulky protégé.

"*Qu' avez-vous, Joseph?*" she said carelessly "Have you been here long? and are you hungry? I think we all have an appetite. Mrs. Lake was very busy, or I know she would have kept us to luncheon. Madame de Presles, my dear, we shall do honor to any thing you will give us for a repast. What, Joseph! you are not going? Oh, no! you will stay, and eat with us."

"Not this morning, I thank you," replied Master Fleury, enfolding himself in all the dignity at his command. "Some other day I will accept the privilege, when you are disengaged. Permit me to wish you good-morning."

"That is an entertaining young fellow," ob-

served Baldwyn, with an air of placid amusement, when the Frenchman had withdrawn his fiery gaze from Charlotte's innocent face, and taken himself stiffly into the hallway.

"Hark! Dear me, he has tumbled over a cactus!" exclaimed the little lady, with a laugh. "It is very dark to-day in the entrance: I must have it lighted. Yes, poor Joseph! he has eccentric ways — quite provoking at times — but I overlook them. He means no harm in the world; and he is only a boy, truly. You must not mind his little peculiarities, will you?"

"Oh, not at all! they haven't the smallest effect upon me, except as amusement," said Baldwyn indulgently. "Only it seems that you are inclined to spoil him a little; and, when he grows up, you may have to answer for his perverted disposition."

And Charlotte's white cat coming up at this moment with a gracious purr, Mr. Baldwyn turned his indolent attention to her as a more interesting object than pettish young Fleury. It must be admitted that the latter's charge of superciliousness was not wholly undeserved by Mr. Baldwyn.

CHAPTER VI.

A BALL AND CHAIN.

Que me veux-tu, chère fleurette,
Aimable et charmant souvenir?
Demi-morte et demi-coquette,
Jusqu'à moi qui te fait venir?

— De Musset.

En toute chose il faut considérer la fin.

— La Fontaine.

IT was not until a year or two after this period of aggressiveness on Joseph's part that Wolf Schouler was added to the little clique — the "Lotos-eaters," as its feminine members had chosen to name it.

On the evening of his first reception among them, Wolf and his friend sat in the former's room at Clarens House. It was a lovely winter night, close upon spring; but there was no hint of vernal change in the clear thrilling-cold air. They had just come from madame Lucas's, where her choicest friends had been summoned

to meet them. A clock on the wall had struck midnight as Wolf opened his door, but they were not inclined to regard its silvery hint. There were no lamp-lights in the room: they sat down under the window, where the February moon whitened their faces and threw such a sheet of light on the floor that it would have seemed chilly but for the glow of burning coal in the reddened marble of the fireplace.

Wolf was putting together some flowers that had been thrown by mysterious hands out of a window, with a burst of muffled laughter, as the two gentlemen were leaving the "enchanted palace."

"Here's a passion-flower, John," the younger one said, holding it up maliciously. "What did I say about coquettes? We don't know which of us it was intended for, though."

"You don't know who threw it, either," said Baldwyn, tilting himself backward, with an unfavorable glance at the suggestive blossom.

"Ah!—'*que me veux-tu, chère fleurette?*'" hummed Wolf, twirling it mockingly in his fingers. "That Miss Winter seems to be quite a nice girl, John."

"So she is; and a remarkably clever writer too. She is a great favorite with Mrs. Lake, the blonde artist you talked to so long this evening. She is excessively modest, but her poems are really of a very high order."

"But she didn't throw the flowers, John," pursued the other teasingly. "Never mind! I know it isn't you the passion-flower was meant for. *I* will assume the responsibility of it. Look here!" and the young man calmly stowed it in his card-case, and buttoned the same securely out of sight. "Now, my sedate old boy, some biography if you please; and leave the ladies to the last, since I know all about madame. Do you know, I took quite a fancy to that County Kildare fellow. You promised to tell me about him some time."

"So I did. I'm glad you like him: he's better worth it than almost anybody I know. One of your solid fellows — will stand by a man like a thousand of brick if he has a fancy for him; and he has one for you already, I can see. Perhaps his principal fault is a disposition to get enthusiastic over people when they have any thing at all to recommend them. But he's

the most faithful of mortals. And the most deliciously frank and simple creature alive. You couldn't get angry with him, no matter how squarely he blurted out a contrary opinion."

"He speaks very much like a Yankee. All the difference I noticed was a touch of English accent now and then."

"Yes: it's only five years or so since he left the 'land of punch, priests, and potatoes.' You see, he is from a first-rate family, and came near being a graduate of Trinity. His father was a military man, rather a rapid liver; and his other relatives all died before he went to college. While he was in Dublin, his father was killed in a duel; and it was found, that, instead of being wealthy, as was supposed, he had contrived to spend every thing he had, and contract some handsome debts besides. Justus left college at once, giving up uncommonly brilliant prospects, and went to thinking what he had best do for a living. As the result, he came over here, and has worked his way up from the smallest of beginnings to a very important place in our craft. He'll be at the top one of these days, and make his fortune; but just now

all the money he gets beyond expenses goes over to Kildare and *Dublun*, as he calls it, to pay his father's debts, which are pretty well cleared off by this time."

"Good boy! I knew he was an honest soul by his face. But I couldn't help thinking it was odd to find such a practical specimen settled down and looking so much at home among that æsthetic party. Is he æsthetic too? has he much in common with their tastes?"

"Well, not very much, with the exception of literature and the drama. As for the other forms of art, they are black-letter to O'Brien. Pictures, and music — why, bless you, he wouldn't know Fra Angelico from Fra Diavolo! It was Mr. Gregory who introduced him to madame Lucas."

"Ah! the large old gentleman with the fine head and stooping shoulders. I noticed that he seemed very familiar with O'Brien. Appears to be rather a decided old fellow. He's not a Western man, surely?"

"No: he lives in one of the New-England cities — is trying the climate here, for his health. You'll be interested to hear him talk

about art: that's his hobby — pictorial art, I mean. He wasn't in full force to-night. But he is the best-informed man, and the most entertaining, on that subject, that I ever met — a regular gazette of knowledge about the different schools and masters and all that. He and Mrs. Lake are great cronies. You won't mind his brusquerie when you know him better: he's a man of very great refinement, although he *is* a trifle crusty at times. Mrs. Lake admires him very much."

"Ah! tell me about Mrs. Lake," said Wolf, delicately preparing himself a cigarette, and moon-gazing through its lilac vapor. "I consider her superb. If she were a few years younger, she would be positively enchanting."

"She's only thirty-five, my son," said Baldwyn, following his example. "And she doesn't look that. Her husband has been dead five or six years or more. She has a perfect picture of a boy, the most mischievous little spirit you ever saw. I shouldn't be surprised if the ladies were to discover a strong resemblance between you and that imp by and by. I was rather struck by it myself. Little David looks just as

you might have looked in your angelic infancy. He does the most exasperating bits of mischief with a face of undisturbed sweetness, and looks at you with his soft, solemn eye as if he had just dropped down from the clouds."

"Alas, I have lost that early sweetness from my eye!" murmured Wolf, winking it mildly at the moon. "The trailing clouds of glory are completely shaken from my mortal investment. *Trailing* reminds me — I do like a woman to wear a long, limp dress, such as Mrs. Lake wore to-night. Such a statuesque figure as she was, standing by the piano! and such a fine profile! You'd know her for an artist by the way she knots up her hair. I always had a weakness for that particular shade of light hair — with a large wave in it, such as the old Greek ladies affected."

"Yes: she is a very classic figure. Take her with little David in her arms any time, and it would make a capital study for Andromache with the infant Astyanax, or Thetis playing with little Achilles, or any other fair mother of antiquity."

"I should think she would use herself for a

model in her painting," said Wolf "Doesn't she?"

"Sometimes; but she prefers to use other people. She is painting a portrait of madame Lucas now, for her own pleasure. It will be very fine. I must take you to see it at her studio."

"I shall be delighted. The two ladies appear to be great friends: is it a genuine attraction, or only one of those spasmodic fancies that ladies indulge in so commonly? Because 'these violent delights have violent ends,' you know; and one may generally expect a grand anti-climax when a feminine pair get so wrapped up in each other."

"Oh, no! I think there's no danger of that result. Madame Lucas is one of those rare women who can count as many admirers of her own sex as of the other: there is something winning about her that would completely extinguish any jealousy caused by her fascination. And Mrs. Lake has the most generous and noble disposition you can imagine, besides being more mature than madame Lucas."

"One would almost think you had lost your

heart, Baldwyn," said Wolf cunningly, still observing the lunar expanse under obscuration of smoke-whirls.

"Now, Schouler, if you wish me to keep my temper, just avoid all such aggravating insinuations. I admire madame Lucas exceedingly, but I must insist that you stop talking nonsense about losing my heart to her!"

"Oh!" remarked the other, withdrawing his gaze from the sky to look artlessly at his friend, "I didn't say which one. But you are so penetrating, Baldwyn! There! I'll be docile now, and not tempt you to break any commandments. I should have remembered —

> "'Les gens d'esprit et les heureux
> Ne sont jamais bien amoureux.'

Excuse me, old man: I will suspect you no more."

Baldwyn puffed in vexed silence; and Wolf, once more directing his sly gaze to the heavens, mischievously stroked that pocket of his coat which contained the card-case.

"Shouldn't you like to know how long I'm going to stay in St. Leon, John?" inquired the

latter gentleman presently, in a cajoling tone. "Couldn't you dispense with my fooleries at a very proximate date? and haven't I bothered you enough yet to make my departure a blessing?"

"Ah, my boy!" said Baldwyn, turning to him suddenly, with a kind look, "there's one thing I should like to know about, but you don't offer to tell me. Do you need to be told of my concern for you? Have I known your face all this time so well, and you expect me to take you for a contented man? You have given me a hint or two — yes, a fact or two — about yourself that were very surprising, and gave me great anxiety. I know that your future is partly disposed of — you are married — you would not tell me to whom, nor where it happened; and your secrecy gives me good reason for concern. Why must you keep that hidden from me? Can't you trust me, Wolf?"

The younger man did not change his attitude nor his up-turned gaze: but the smile died away; and a look of pale ennui crept in its stead over his face, darkening the large, heavy-lidded eyes.

In the nature of some people there is a fixed aversion to a *crisis* — of thought, speech, action — no matter what; a dread of any thing sensational, demanding a show of emotion. Wolf Schouler was one of these people: when he saw a "situation" approaching, he glided away from it, if possible, or put a careless face on it; but there was no eluding the earnest questions of his friend.

"O Baldwyn!" he said, after a slight pause, dropping his eyes wearily to the frost-white roofs, and thence to the still, wind-swept street, "why should I talk to you about disagreeable things, especially things that I don't talk about to myself? You don't believe, of course, that I have done any thing wrong — unworthy?"

"No! On my honor, no!"

"Then, my friend, why can't you be satisfied with what I have told you? It isn't very much, quite true; but it is all that is requisite. You know, John, I am proud. I might mention several other failings of my make-up, but this only is in question now. My pride draws back from confessing a mistake — a wofully foolish one — even to my best friend, which you are,

John — I admit that. If it would do any good, I could face the unpleasantness; but it wouldn't. And I don't like to think about it any more than I can help. If a man makes a fool of himself, he's never fond of recalling it afterwards. I have your word that you think well of me: now, do you still insist on my going into particulars that are of no possible use to you, and most uncommonly depressing to me?"

"Insist? no. I don't insist on your doing any thing. I fancied it might be a relief to you if you gave me your confidence, in this as in other things. But I don't urge it."

They sat quiet for a little while, with rather gloomy faces, following each his own mental pathway. Baldwyn presently added with a thoughtful air, "But why, Wolf, are you so bent on keeping the fact from everybody else? Why not have it known, so far as I know it? You are not bound to go into further details with anybody, and no one would take the liberty to be inquisitive about it."

"Ah no, Baldwyn, that wouldn't do at all!" Wolf said, shaking his thick hair decidedly. "I

couldn't stand it. People would not ask questions; but they would be speculating and gossiping about me, and I should be conscious of it. How much simpler it will be to say nothing at all on the subject!"

"Simpler, certainly," Baldwyn answered with a little shrug; "but as to its being wiser" —

"Why not? Say I make a temporary stay here — what difference will it make whether I label myself a jaded old fellow, with a ball and chain attached, or do a little masquerading as a gay, untrammelled youth, just by way of lightening my spirits?"

"You don't know what difference it might make," said the other, after a pause. The moon had slid behind a black cloud, so that the expression of his face was not seen; but his voice had softened again, and Wolf was moved at its vibration of sympathy. The dialogue was getting to have a little too much of the sensational in its sentiment, however, to suit the latter's taste; and he made one of his characteristic swerves away from it.

"Come, old preacher," he said, getting up with a slight access of buoyancy, and taking a

turn across the room, "let me have a little peace now! I take your advice sometimes, you know; but once in a while I want my own way. What's done cannot be undone: let us tuck it out of sight, and be as jolly as we can in the mean time! Life is none too jolly an affair, at its best."

Baldwyn looked at him as he stood in the firelight, his hands thrust in his pockets, his fine head thrown back jauntily; and if he had had any cause for distrust or dislike of this man, surely it would have all been lost in the compassion which filled him, and which found expression in a long, half-smothered sigh. The sigh was drowned, however, by the clear tones of the little clock striking two. Baldwyn rose, and crossed over to the fireplace, and leaned on his friend's shoulder, kindly stroking it.

"It's time I was taking myself home, Wolf. I'll have to be out early to-morrow, and I must get a little sleep."

"Don't lose any on my account, then. Don't you think, after all, that I'm a tolerably wise fellow, John?"

"Ah! — tolerably wise? perhaps — who

knows?" Baldwyn answered, with a sad laugh, tapping thoughtfully on the broad shoulder. "As wise as anybody, very likely. Good-night, wise man!"

"And we are jolly again, aren't we?" inquired Wolf, as he shook hands in his boyish way.

"Oh, very jolly!" said the other pensively, passing over the threshold.

As he went along the cold street under Wolf's window, he heard it open; and a small whistle drew his eyes upward. Something flew out, and dropped on the frosty sidewalk at his feet. It was a handful of wilted flowers, much the worse for confinement in a warm pocket; but, as Baldwyn picked them up, he saw no passion-flower among them. A faint laugh echoed with rather ghostly effect on the sharp air as the window rattled down again; and Baldwyn hurried away through the lamp-lit silence.

CHAPTER VII.

IN A STUDIO.

Is't not a face of most bewildering brightness?

IT being well known that a studio, like a living-apartment, reflects the personality of its occupant, we can see that Helena Lake's painting-room must have been an interesting place. A studio is not necessarily picturesque or beautiful. Wolf had visited many an artist's den that was far from inviting — cobwebby, gloomy-cornered, canvas-littered, the very draperies and pieces of armor having an eerie and forlorn aspect, as being on intimate terms with the stealthy mice that made swift transits through their dusty shadows.

But Mrs. Lake's studio, of course, was no such place. It was a large, bright room, with plenty of skylight and sliding curtains, the walls hung over with stuffs of grateful colors,

and no pictures in sight except the immediate canvas in hand, and some works of foreign artists highly prized by their owner. The room was furnished, in fact, to look like a parlor, and might have been taken for such but for the easels, the low platform, and a despondent lay-figure shrouded in the corner. Other apartments adjoining this formed Mrs. Lake's home; it was in a large building where there were more studios: but she, her little son, and her maid, had their own "flat," and lived in it as contentedly as birds.

She had a very happy and reposeful nature, and the calm, fair-skinned health of an Englishwoman, though more slender of shape and somewhat paler in color. Her husband had been an artist, quite a notable one. She had studied with him; and, after his death, she took up his palette and brushes, and painted steadily on, with the half-accepted idea that his hand was still directing the strokes. In any case, her success was very great; and the double consolation of Art and the little David drew her gradually back to her natural serene content. Little David was, as Baldwyn said,

the most mischievous of little spirits, but a sweet-natured and fascinating elf, wearing a grave, manly expression on his round face, and a look as placid as his mother's in his full, dark eyes.

It was a morning set apart for work on Charlotte's portrait. The fair-haired artist had made her preliminary arrangements, and settled herself at the easel, while waiting for her model, to commence rather an elaborate accessory bit in the shape of a dish of plums and nectarines. She had conceived the idea of making her picture a reproduction of an old Italian work which she greatly admired, with the substitution of madame Lucas for the stout Venetian lady who figured therein. The dress was simple but very graceful, the position charming; and the accessories gave Mrs. Lake an opportunity for introducing a little fruit-study, to her extreme satisfaction. She had composed a delightful piece of color with the plums and nectarines in a gilt platter among trailing leaves; and, seeing Master Davey absorbed in busy converse with the lay-figure, she sat down, and went eagerly to work. Her

model, in the mean time, was driving about in the little olive-colored carriage, from store to store, taking in milliner, florist, dressmaker, and so forth, on the round. Wolf Schouler, walking at an easy pace along one of those busy streets, thought he recognized a certain little equipage standing over the way before a large flower-store, and crossed to it immediately. Charlotte was just about to enter, and was speaking to the driver. She was carrying some blazing scarlet flowers, which had their natural effect on her costume, a quiet combination of delicate otter-fur and fawn-tinted silk.

"How she understands dress!" was Wolf's mental remark. The small, round bonnet of otter-skin, framing her dimpled face, gave it a more kitten-like air than ever; and the hazel eyes seemed to shine with the clearest sparkle possible to eyes. They glanced around in a moment, and took in the advancing gentleman; and madame let go the door-handle instantly, and turned to meet him.

"Good-morning," she said, looking very much pleased. "I am glad to see you, Mr. Schouler. Don't disturb my flowers — that's

right! Isn't this a fine color? I thought Mrs. Lake might like to paint them in somewhere. I go to be painted this morning."

"Oh! I have heard about the portrait. Baldwyn promised to take me to look at it sometime, if you don't object. I want very much to see it."

"You have not been to Mrs. Lake's studio yet? You know where it is — yes? Why should you wait for Mr. Baldwyn, then? You may come this morning if you would like. Should you?"

"It is the most agreeable suggestion you could make, madame, at present. I will certainly come, assuming that Mrs. Lake will let me."

"Oh! I will answer for her. I am not going just now, for I have one or two more errands; but if you come in an hour or so, that will be a very good time. I will hurry away, then, to be in season. In an hour." And she was in the carriage in a moment, and off, shaking the scarlet flowers through the window. There was plenty of time for Wolf to go and find Baldwyn to accompany him; but the young man

reasoned that he alone was invited at this special time; also that Baldwyn was very likely to be engaged, and so it was hardly worth while to run after him. And he continued his promenade; and, passing a window seductive with very "particular" French bonbons, remembered that Mrs. Lake had a little boy, and went in, and charged his pockets with that expensive sweetness.

At the expiration of the hour he was very prompt in finding his way to the studio. Having reached the first landing, and paused in the obscurity to make out the number of a door, he was a trifle surprised by a sudden whizzing noise, and the appearance of a small object "tobogganing" down the stair-rail with great velocity. At the end of the rail, where there was a bronze figure-lamp, the little object reversed itself nimbly, and remained astride, holding by the lamp. As Wolf approached, he found it to be a very tiny urchin, regarding him with a sober face from two magnificent brown eyes.

"Are you the gentleman that's going to see the picture up stairs?" inquired this little per-

son composedly, after a silent gaze of investigation.

"I dare say," said Wolf. "I am going to see a picture at Mrs. Lake's. *You* are the gentleman who lives there, I fancy."

"Yes, sir," assented the midget politely. "I mean mamma Charlotte's picture, you know. It's a rouser!"

The young gentleman pronounced it "wouser," not having his tongue completely under control; but his intention was none the less sincere.

"Indeed!" said Wolf, amused. "Your name is David, I believe. Here, let me jump you off the baluster. Does your mamma permit you to take this kind of exercise, Master David?"

"She can't help herself," responded the slider frankly. "I'd like to go down the way you do on a sled, you know; but I can't keep stwaight — I twied it once."

"Heavens! did you fall off?" exclaimed Wolf, at this alarming picture.

"Yes; but 'twas on this side the wail, and I didn't go far. Mamma Charlotte picked me up, and she promised not to tell."

"You call the other lady mamma too, do you?" inquired Wolf, as they mounted the stairs.

"Yes: there's mamma, and mamma Charlotte. I knew you were coming: I heard them talk about you. That's my door — the open one. Mamma said she hoped you wouldn't come till she'd finished the hair, the light was so nice."

"O David, David, my terrible child! what are you saying?" cried Mrs. Lake's pleasant voice, coming through the open doorway. "He doesn't mean to be inhospitable, Mr. Schouler; and I'm sure I didn't. We'll all be delighted to see you, though the light *is* nice; and I'm going to continue painting, with your permission."

Wolf's first view of "the studio" was a most favorable one.

"How orderly you are here!" he exclaimed in wonder, noticing the conspicuous absence of rubbish and dauby canvas. "Where do you keep the odds and ends? And what a delightful room this is!" admiring the airy curtains, and the sweep of light through the brilliant green of ferneries.

"I am not to move, Mr. Schouler," said a soft voice behind an immense screen; "but you can come around here, and tell us what you think of our work."

"Yes: come and criticise," said Mrs. Lake, leading him in sight of the easel. Charlotte was sitting in a carven chair on the low platform, her arms resting on a little stand beside her, her head inclined toward a goldfinch supposed to be perched there. The light from the sky-window fell straight upon her head, making the "crisping ripples" of brown hair to glitter in a wonderful way. The portrait from which her attitude was copied stood near by; but that lady of Venetian paint suffered very considerably in the comparison with her living imitator. Wolf made an instant wheel toward the canvas at which Mrs. Lake sat down.

"Ah, that's an admirable likeness!" he said in great enthusiasm. "Mrs. Lake, it is positively admirable! Doesn't everybody think so? don't you think so, madame Lucas?"

"Helena is modest," said that lady: "she can find no end of fault with it, if you let her. *I* like it — yes, very much indeed. I think the idea of the composition is so clever."

"Take this chair, Mr. Schouler," said the artist, already hard at work; "and excuse me if I don't talk just now: I shall be absorbed in a moment, and I'm avaricious of this light. You may talk all you please, and amuse my subject."

"I will tell you something still better to do," suggested the subject, glancing up without moving her head: "you could sing to us; and that would inspire Mrs. Lake, and preserve the happy expression necessary to my features."

"How do you know I am capable of it?" asked Wolf curiously.

"Oh, I know! I was told. Besides, one sees it in your face. Please do! it will have such an excellent effect on the picture."

"But I can't sing without an instrument, and I don't see even a banjo."

"Oh, yes! there is a piano at the end of the room, beyond the screen. Come, be amiable! We will have one of your nice little *lieder*, if you please."

"I would so much rather stay here and look on," remonstrated Wolf faintly; but he actually went, to the surprise of the two ladies,

who did not expect it in the least. He sang at first a frisky little student-song in German, and thought of the last time he had joined in it with Baldwyn, floating down the Saale to Merseburg, with a wild crew from their university. Then he told that incident to the ladies and Master Davey, who was intensely impressed by the song; and Charlotte declared she could see the streamers flying and the waves dancing; and Mrs. Lake mentioned practically that she had once tasted some Merseburg beer, and it was very bad indeed.

"We didn't think so in those days," Wolf said with a laugh. And then he wandered off into a ballad, which went very softly, and was not at all merry like the other.

"Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir trauemt', du verliessest mich.
Ich wachte auf, unf ich weinte
Noch lange bitterlich."

Wolf sang well, with a good deal of sentiment; and, being so screened from his listeners, felt somewhat as if alone, and threw considerable passion into those mournful words. Neither of the ladies understood German very well, but

the musical intention of the ballad was distinct enough to both.

"Ah! that's very beautiful, Mr. Schouler," called out Mrs. Lake, when he finished; "but for mercy's sake, if my sitter's face is to reflect all your music, do let us have something more lively, like the first one! I've left off painting the hair now, and am working on the face; but the right expression is entirely lost, owing to the ballad!"

"I was not aware of it," Charlotte said, "but no doubt she is right. One ought not to look sad, though, when the song is so lovely. But let us have one more of the merry kind, then."

Wolf had just launched obediently into a rollicking strain, of the same family as the first, when a little laugh and exclamation from his auditors checked it; and he looked around, and saw a new comer.

"Well, upon my word!" said this gentleman blankly, standing in the door, and surveying the party.

"Oh, here's Mr. Baldwyn! jolly!" cried Master Davey, scurrying up to embrace the visitor's knees. Wolf came away from the

piano, laughing, and wearing rather a convicted air; and Charlotte began to chatter melodiously in French.

"So you have forestalled me for once, young man," observed Baldwyn with a sharp look. "That's a nice song for ladies' reception-rooms, too!"

"It's an excellent one for a studio," said Mrs. Lake defensively. "He has been seraphically good, and entertained us so charmingly! And we're not at all glad to see *you*, if you're in one of your uncertain humors, more especially as I *did* want to get this eye right before I stopped — but it's of no use now, I might as well drop my brushes at once," which she did, trying without any success whatever to look unamiable.

"It was my fault," Charlotte said, springing up, and stretching out her arms in the relief of a changed attitude, "that he came here without you. I met him this morning, and asked him to come."

"Oh, well! I forgive you all. See, Mrs. Lake, I am perfectly sweet-tempered, also very thirsty. Is there no fountain of sweet waters, spirituous

liquors, hot coffee, or any thing of the sort, on tap in your Bohemian demesne?"

"It is almost time for our coffee, I know," said the lady, going to ring for it. "You may have some of that, if you will be agreeable. — Oh, oh!" she cried presently, making a dismayed rush toward the "study of plums," which had been put aside out of the sun during the sitting. "Oh, my beautiful fruit-piece! Just look here!"

"What is it?" the others asked, startled by her tragic tone.

"Why, my study! my lovely plums! all demolished — eaten up! That child — where is he?"

Master Davey, in fact, during the ballad-singing — which moved his unfledged soul less than the view of plums on a level with his nose — had made a silent attack upon them without regard to consequences; and now, realizing his imprudence by his mamma's vexation, was retiring meekly from the room.

"Aha! there goes the guilty!" exclaimed Charlotte, running after him, and bringing him back in a state of great depression.

"You good-for-nothing rogue!" said Baldwyn sternly. "What do you mean by devouring your mother's models?"

The culprit, perceiving the vanity of excuses, said nothing, but snuggled from his mother's severely mute gaze against Charlotte's skirts.

"Oh, don't be so hard on the little fellow!" put in Wolf, melted by the irresistible melancholy of the big dark eyes. "Here, give him over to me: I'll fix him!"

And having taken possession of the wee sinner, he administered justice in the shape of huge sugar-plums with which he packed his little pockets, — representing in allegory the world's general treatment of successful full-sized pilferers.

"Your humanity is superior to your judgment," commented Baldwyn, smiling over his coffee-cup, as the prisoner was dismissed in high feather.

"Do you know, Mr. Schouler, how much they say Davey looks like you?" said Mrs. Lake, genially dispensing the dainty thimblefuls of Mocha, her brushes and paint being made away with. "I don't see it very clearly myself, but they say so."

"He certainly does," Charlotte affirmed: "it is quite remarkable. Only his eyes are so dark, and Mr. Schouler's are gray."

"Baldwyn made the same observation. But it is too flattering. I feel as if I were charged with resembling the king of the fairies himself," returned Wolf, glancing toward the small figure now capering with an easy conscience among the grass-green ferns.

They finished their coffee gayly; and the two ladies sang an Italian duet by way of climax, before their guests departed. Charlotte took them in her *coupé* a short way; and, by that time, it was quite far into the afternoon: so that the little otter-fur bonnet might naturally have stamped its image on one's retina, even with some degree of permanence.

CHAPTER VIII.

"LOTOS-EATERS."

Idleness is sweet and sacred.

— LANDOR.

Die Herren, die waren æsthetisch,
Die Damen von zartem Gefuehl.

— HEINE.

CHARLOTTE'S pretty house was as extraordinary as its pretty owner, and reflected from every niche and corner her odd and graceful fancy. The Oriental luxury with which she would have liked to invest every thing about her was kept in check by some discretion of instinct that had held its own against the influences of her early growth. Her fondness for flowers and plants was an extravagance; it was her nearest approach to a transgression of good taste: but it annoyed none of her friends except Baldwyn, and he never remonstrated unless in jest.

The dark hall-way lined with cactus, like a sort of prickly cavern, was one of her whims, which Baldwyn often laughed at. She had a theory that the mysterious gloom of the entrance, usually displayed by the light of a little swinging lamp like a censer, heightened the cheerful effect of the rooms adjoining. That it certainly did, whatever snares might await incautious feet in the polished floor, and the treachery of rugs unnumbered. On either side there were curtained openings, one leading into the bright room where the piano stood, the other into a long apartment running the whole length of the house, which Charlotte had had remodelled immediately on taking possession. The walls were broken by a series of pilasters, running up into the semblance of arches that crossed the high ceiling; between them clung masses of great-leaved creepers, festooning themselves around the deep windows, and reaching up even to the ceiling, which had been tinted pale-blue like the sky. There was no furniture in this room, except little consoles for cut-flowers, and ottomans and striped Algerian cushions lying around on the floor; and at

either end it opened out — in the warm season — through a row of arches into the fresh gloom of gardens. It gave one an out-of-door sensation to sit in this room — *the garden-hall*, Charlotte had named it. In the garden-hall she had her little Arcadian reunions of the "Lotos-eaters," nearly every day, as soon as the weather was mild enough.

To this room came Baldwyn one prematurely summerish afternoon, escaped from his business engagements, and hurrying to the garden-hall like a school-boy to his playground.

It was a pretty and fantastic scene, like a page of Italian romance, that he looked in upon between the parted draperies. A little concerto of chatter rose from the group at the farther end of the room, Fleury's guitar sustaining a soft obligato from a corner. Charlotte, dressed in some thin yellowish stuff, with topazes for ear-drops, darting golden rays into her brown hair, sat in a deliciously lazy attitude, leaning back among the creepers, her dimpled hands dropped by her side. Joseph, half-hidden in leaves, showed his dark, melancholy head and sombre eyes close by, chinking

his guitar as he watched Wolf, who had made himself a couch of cushions, *à l'Orientale*, and lay near his hostess with an expression of great contentment. Mrs. Lake, sitting in a drift of white-and-lilac drapery, was bending her blonde head over a small sketch-book, where her clever pencil was amusing itself with careless outlines of her companions. Jenny Winter, faithful satellite, leaned beside her, silent and clear-eyed as usual, holding a relay of pencils. Mr. Gregory's broad, stooping shoulders and iron-gray head were stationed in the centre of the group: he had his hands full of reviews from which he had evidently been reading, and they were talking over the various articles. In one of the long windows a little heap of white duck and a bunch of tangled brown hair appeared among the *cissus quinquefolia:* it was little Davey Lake, curled up on the broad sill, where he had fallen asleep. He was tired of playing with Dagobert; and that dignified bird sat beside him, his sharp eyes travelling around the circle in solemn scrutiny.

Justus O'Brien was there too, his square, cropped head and honest blue eyes not ineffect-

ive in contrast with the other more picturesque figures: his customary hurry seemed to have been narcotized by the "sweet-do-nothing" atmosphere of the garden-hall; he sat amiably holding Charlotte's little cat, which had come to him confidently, like every thing else small and dependent that happened in his way. In a dim alley of the garden behind the house Eudoxie's shy figure appeared and disappeared by glimpses: she was more at ease out there alone.

"You ought to look at yourselves from a distance," called out Baldwyn, coming through the portière. "Otherwise you can't have any idea how artistic it is."

"'Est-ce toi, Conradin, ou ta vivante image?
Oui, voilà son regard! c'est son touchant langage!'"

declaimed Wolf, turning over, and surveying him with lazy benignity.

"Oh, how good of you to overrule every thing and come!" Charlotte cries, twinkling the topazes in a fervor of hospitality. Justus smiles radiantly, but is motionless for fear of discomposing the kitten, which has gone peacefully to sleep between his broad hands.

"You are late, young man. Take a chair," said Mr. Gregory, designating the flattest of the cushions scattered about, with gorgeous tassels on all its corners.

"For shame, now!" exclaims Charlotte, laughing. "I had to get Mr. Gregory a Louis Quinze chair with a dreadfully uncomfortable carved back, before he would consent to sit down at all."

"I despise these Moorish effeminacies," said the old gentleman dogmatically. "We had given you up, young man."

"I know I am late," Baldwyn answered, taking the indicated seat with humility. "It's a piece of luck that I could get away at all to-day. The world is too much with me at present, you know. I am safe from its clutches only within its charmed walls. Mrs. Lake, you look like a study for the tenth Muse. What were you all absorbed in when I came?"

"Mr. Gregory has been reading us criticisms of the new dramatic star," said Mrs. Lake. "We were criticising the critics. We think they are very unjust, as a whole."

"Unjust? Oh, of course! Madame Krano-

witzka" (Baldwyn was very glib with foreign names) "has a talent considerably above most of their heads: though that's not their fault, after all. No man, we can well believe, would be a donkey if he knew how to avoid it."

"Perhaps they are not conscious of being donkeys," Charlotte observed reflectively. "Mr. Baldwyn is quite cruel to the whole race of critics: he has probably some good reason for his animus," she added with a smile of pretty malice.

"Well, but," Mrs. Lake put in, "they certainly do make a very poor estimate in this case. I have seen madame with-the-dreadful-name a number of times; and my humble opinion would put her on a level with the Rosenfeldt, who raised quite a wild enthusiasm among these very people."

"Oh, well, my dear lady, consider, remember!" said Baldwyn. "Rosenfeldt has not only genius, she has a much better card to take our critics with — her oddity. They revere oddity; but they aren't up to genius, don't you know? above all, this peculiar sort of genius. And Rosenfeldt was an Old-World favorite before she came over here, too — better still! But for

that she wouldn't have won any more laurels than poor Kranowitzka, who had no prestige to speak of, and conducts herself, to all appearances, like other respectable human beings."

"Yes," Wolf said: "there's a delicacy of shading in these foreign artists' performances, a fine finish, that is altogether lost on most of the fellows who do the criticising, and not only on them, but on the vast majority of the public. An American audience as a whole, say what you please, is not *spirituel* enough to remotely appreciate either Kranowitzka or Rosenfeldt; and I'm an American citizen too, mind you. I'm not slandering my good fellow-citizens, am I, Baldwyn? And I know there's a handful of people here and there that do feel a real artistic delight in studying and applauding these brilliant stars. *We* form one such handful, you know," he said, nodding gayly at his friends.

"It is my conviction," said Justus O'Brien, bursting out suddenly, as his habit was, after a long silence, "that histrionic art is on the wane, any way! Look at the stage-stuff that is run after nowadays, even in the country that understands the drama better than any other, *your*

country, madame Lucas: all the fine historic-tragedy figures are elbowed out of the way by Sphinxes and Strangers, whose success depends about as much on their wardrobe as on their inspiration."

If Justus had a weakness, it was a slight craze for haranguing on the subject of the drama.

"Don't forget," Mr. Gregory suggested, "that, but for such productions as you mention, we should have no Kranowitzka nor Rosenfeldt either. Great Melpomene would crush them both out of existence! There is now no Mars in France, no Siddons in England. Let us even be thankful to Feuillet and Dumas for giving *raison d'être* to these modern ladies: Italy and Germany alone can lay offerings on the higher altars."

"As for me," said Wolf, who was poetically plaiting up some long vines into garlands, "tread me under foot if you will; but I prefer finish to inspiration. I would rather see a 'contemporary play,' all boudoirs and conservatories, perfectly set and acted throughout, than to see Berenice herself walking about

among a lot of sticks for a company, and making one's flesh creep with her tremendous genius! I like two or three *jeunes comiques*, and plenty of clever by-play to make me laugh: it's healthier than so much classicism."

It is uncertain what Justus O'Brien would have said to this lax sentiment; his broad forehead reddened, and indignation shot from his blue eyes: but he forgot the kitten momentarily, and its startled and reproachful howl, as it dropped with a bump on the hard floor, disconcerted his rising utterance. Baldwyn, who knew Wolf's habit of making audacious speeches for effect, and Charlotte, who divined a mischievous exaggeration, looked at each other with a laugh; and the former, catching up one of the finished garlands, threw it, by way of digression, over the massive head of the "County Kildare man."

"Lo, young Thespis! Did you never try on the cothurnus, O'Brien?"

"Indeed I didn't!" responded O'Brien, whose speech under excitement was apt to recall his native isle. "I couldn't have got one big enough, d'ye see! I'll never lose my *cult*, as you call it, for the art, though."

"*Viva* Kranowitzka!" cried Charlotte, airily putting another wreath on her own head, and similarly crowning Mrs. Lake's golden braids. There was a general following of her example, even Fleury unbending so far as to submit his sombre head to Mrs. Lake's good-natured decoration; and they all looked presently more than ever like a group of revellers in some land of summer idleness. This effect was heightened by the advent of wondrous fruits, heaped as Vandael might have heaped them for a study, in huge baskets of silver network, overrun with tangled and flowering green; and slim-necked ancient crystals turned into ruby and topaz by their fragrant contents. The yellow-robed genius of the place flitted about hospitably among her guests, followed by Fleury, whom she had bidden to be cup-bearer.

"Why haven't we a Boccaccio among us? O Italy! O Florence! I smell the fragrance of the orange-trees!" said Wolf, smiling idly on his companions, as he lay with head thrown back on a silken pile of cushions.

"It is the scent of tube-roses," Charlotte

said, tossing a few at him from a great basket on the console. He played with them lightly, and put some into his vest-pocket, observing to himself at the same time what a wonderful variety of expression the young French fellow had, and how uncommonly disagreeable he was capable of looking.

"See what Helena is doing!" cried Jenny Winter, softly clapping her hands. "She is making sketches of all your heads in character: here is Mr. O'Brien, and here's little Davey with a wreath of grapes on his hair."

Mrs. Lake had a quick pencil and a quick eye: one by one the assembled heads appeared in hasty outlines on her paper, each in a different character. Little Davey, who had waked and slipped down among the fruit-baskets, being crowned with clusters by his mamma's admiring hands, presented his round little grape-smirched cheeks and curly locks as the infant Bacchus. Wolf, by reason of a nickname that somebody had bestowed upon him out of Nibelungen verse, figured in the headpiece and armor of the valiant Siegfried. Mr. Gregory's rugged head and grizzled hair bent

under the bays of a Roman senator; presently Joseph's dark eyes looked out somewhat evilly from the shadowy head of a faun; and Charlotte herself smiled with allegresse as the sun-loving Pomona.

In the little buzz of interest centering upon the sketches Baldwyn slipped aside and withdrew into a window-niche to look on without the necessity of speech. He was subject to slight headaches now and then, following upon undue use of his ever-active brain; and one of these had suddenly fastened on him, bringing with it an imperative need of silence. Leaning against a vine-hung column, he watched the group through the screening leaves: they had not perceived his withdrawal. The scene was worth observing: not a figure of them all but deserved some notice; though the silent watcher seemed to rest his eyes chiefly on a brown, German-looking head, and a topaz-lighted silky one, never very remote from each other; and on the less pleasing image of a faun with a dark, unquiet gaze. There was no more romantic head there than the faun's, as it moved restlessly around, now indoors, now

out; but a fanciful person might have imagined a depth of subtle malignity behind its black eyes quite startling in so young a faun. That or some other influence appeared to make a disagreeable impression on Baldwyn. Unconsciously he drew a long breath, and a shade something like a frown skimmed across his forehead: perhaps it was only the vicious throbbing in his temples that caused it, or perhaps it was cast there by the wing of some swift foreboding passing over him.

Joseph's guitar had been chirping to itself at intervals in a desultory way during the afternoon: it was now heard, more muffled by distance, in the garden, whence Joseph's voice also floated in faintly. The song was not pleasant to Baldwyn's ears: it seemed to deepen the shade on his thoughtful forehead.

"Ah, prenez-y garde, marquise!
Cet amour-là, quoiqu' on en dise,
Se retrouvera quelque jour.
Quand un cœur vous a contenue,
Juana, la place est devenue
Trop vaste pour un autre amour.
Ah, prenez-y garde, marquise!"

Eudoxie came, in the shadow of the lime-trees, to listen out of sight. The company indoors were pleased with the song: when it ceased they gave a little patter of applause; and Wolf said, "*Bravo il trovator!*" And, in the next breath he asked with surprise, "Where's Baldwyn?"

"Here," said that gentleman, stepping out of his covert. "Only admiring at a distance." To himself he said, with a mental shake, "Come, this won't do! This is no way to cure a headache."

And then he bestirred himself to be as gay and amusing as he was capable of being — which was very gay and amusing indeed; and the others seemed to catch his spirit. They straggled out into the garden to see the sunset lights; and the darkening walks were alive with laughing voices, Charlotte's clearer than any. She sang, and Wolf sang; and Helena Lake, walking with her sleepy boy gathered in her arms, sang also, a cradle-song soft as the rustle of the lime-branches. Somebody slipped back into the deserted rooms to Charlotte's piano, and coaxed from it one of Schumann's

breezy wood-songs; so the air was full of musical murmurs, and the final fading of the western crimson ended a little idyl of an afternoon, a sample of many afternoons that the "Lotos-eaters" spent together at Maison-de-Presles.

Baldwyn came away before the others, thinking that he would make his way home in solitude; but, as he passed the iron hedge-lined fence of Charlotte's domain, a quick step caught up with his. It was Justus O'Brien, who gave him an affectionate clap on the shoulder that made his head ring.

"You're looking pale to-night: what ails you? You've a headache, I fancy."

"Yes: a trifle," Baldwyn answered. "Have you enjoyed the afternoon, O'Brien?"

"Haven't I though!" exclaimed that enthusiastic young man. "Wasn't it delightful?"

"O Justus, Justus!" the other said, speaking from a sudden impulse, "there's an element brewing there that will work 'em woe!"

Justus started; but, as the curious expression of dismay on his honest face persuaded a twinkle into his friend's eye, he concluded that

it was a joke, and laughed somewhat undecidedly.

Baldwyn also burst into a laugh, rather a grim one.

"My head is absurdly out of sorts to-night: it sets me at saying queer things. You'd better take me right home, O'Brien: I'm intoxicated with lotos-juice!"

CHAPTER IX.

REVERSES, AND ASPIRATIONS.

Ah, Dupont, que c'est doux de tout déprécier!

— De Musset.

I assert solemnly, and will to the last maintain, that it is one thing to write a novel, and another to get money for it.

— Thackeray.

CHARLOTTE came in among her little household one day, and sat down beside the two women at their needlework, pushing back her hat as though it were too heavy for her forehead. She held some perplexed-looking papers in her hands; and she was rather pale, but smiled with her usual playful air.

"My friends," said she, shaking the papers at them, "bad news! bad news!"

Eudoxie gasped, and madame de Presles looked up in silent anxiety. Charlotte held out a sheet, and showed them the firm-name, "Garvey and Romeira," stamped in the corner.

"Mr. Romeira has run away," she said simply.

"Run away! What for, *bon Dieu?*" cried Eudoxie.

"That concerns the firm, Eudoxie," Charlotte answered: "it does not concern me. What *does* concern me a little is, that he has taken my money with him!"

"Oh, my child!" exclaimed poor madame de Presles, starting up, and going to Charlotte in a burst of distress. But Charlotte was quite self possessed, and needed attention far less than Eudoxie, who had succumbed instantly to all sorts of woful apprehensions, and sat completely stupefied with alarm.

"Why, don't be so overpowered!" Charlotte said encouragingly, calling up one of her blithe smiles: "it is not so very bad, after all. We shall not become paupers — not at present: he only had half the money, you know."

"It is a terrible sum to lose," sighed madame de Presles tearfully.

"*Après tout,*" said Eudoxie, recovering, "*il y a toujours M. Garvey!* What will he do for us, M. Garvey? He will make restitution, surely?"

"Ah, no, my child!" said madame de Presles dejectedly: "he is an American!"

Clearly, madame de Presles' small business experience with citizens of the New World had not given her an extreme confidence in their probity.

"Poor Mr. Garvey!" said Charlotte: "it is pretty hard for him. I think he is an honest man, and he tells me that Mr. Romeira has ruined him. He will not be able to clear himself, much less to make up our loss. I am sorry for him. That Romeira was a very plausible man."

"But if they could catch him," Eudoxie suggested, "the loss would be repaired, would it not?"

"If they should catch him, they would not catch the money with him. He is too shrewd for that. But they will not catch him. I dare say he has gone to Brazil, where he came from, and probably well disguised."

"It is the greatest blessing that you take it so easily, my dear," wept madame de Presles, who was really the most afflicted one of the three. "I cannot think what I should do but for that!"

"Oh! there is no use in mourning over it," the light-hearted little lady answered, folding up her unlucky letters. "We shall do very well as it is. There is the other half safe in this house, and in the bank here. We have enough to live on as comfortably as ever, only we must cut down some of our extravagances, and pay a little more attention to the pocket-book. We will continue to live here for the present; and I have been thinking that Joseph would like to come and occupy one of our extra rooms, we have so many more than we need. He finds it necessary to be here so much that it would be very convenient for him," she said, smiling.

So philosophically did the airy little soul meet the mishaps of life, that it was no wonder her companions marvelled, well as they knew the force hidden under her butterfly exterior. Her younger experiences had had much to do with this, very likely; many a lesson of thrift in the old Pinel house had made its lasting impression on a naturally lavish nature; six years of abundance had not by any means made an irreclaimable spendthrift of madame Lucas.

"I have hardly realized my riches all this time, in spite of the florists' and picture-dealers' bills," she said gayly: "it has been a perfect dream to me, and I don't realize in the least that some of it is gone. That is one reason why I mind it so little, you see. And, at all events, I am still a Queen of Sheba compared to what I was at home."

Joseph was summoned to an interview, and was first thrown into consternation by the New-York letters, and afterwards raised to a pinnacle of joy by the delightful proposal that he should take up his abode at Maison-de-Presles. Of course he jumped at the idea, and went off instantly to give warning to his landlady. Charlotte set about planning the restriction of expenses; some superfluous underlings were dismissed; a few rather extravagant orders were countermanded; and madame de Presles was adjured to keep an uncommonly sharp eye on all things relative to the household. Charlotte was as bright and busy as possible with her arrangements: she had an amazing tact in business. But there were ideas expanding in her mind that she kept quiet about for the time.

Years ago, when she was a school-girl, she had an ambition. It was quite an importunate ambition, and rather less reasonable than her subsequent ones of making a wealthy marriage and enslaving society; but she had some encouragement for it. She wanted to be an authoress. Madame de Presles, who was in those days an assistant teacher in the convent-school, used often to find the little tawny pupil — the cunningest and cleverest in all the classes — coiled up on a window-seat in their dingy library, greedily going through one of its much-worn volumes, or staring away from the pages with dreamer's eyes into the very narrow enclosure of the convent garden. In that quaint and somewhat musty solitude little Charlotte used to sigh over "Ourika," and muse about Saint-Preux; and not seldom "made up" kindred characters in her own head, who walked mistily before her mind's eye, and went through fragmentary scenes that never were completed. It was madame de Presles who first commended the little essays Charlotte used to write: she found a good deal of cleverness in them, and Charlotte never forgot those early

praises. She had written since, now and then, and really showed a certain amount of talent. It was a half-acknowledged dream of hers — a twin-dream to that one of social prestige — to be admired some day as a literary lady. The mishap to her fortune gave it a new life, and it rose suddenly before her eyes more engaging than ever.

What if she should try now? what if the dream should by any chance become a reality? Oh the rose-colored fancy! Then the lost property might be replaced, so that the *affaire Romeira* should be as if it had never been — then madame Lucas, of course under some graceful pseudonym, might rise to the level of those other illustrious mesdames, whose writings she used to pore over with reverence at school — then would follow all the delightful sequences of success — the adulation, the curiosity, the flattery of the many-voiced press; — and at this point Charlotte always stopped and shook herself warningly, reflecting that "from the cup to the lip is a long distance."

But the newly-revived idea took firm hold

upon her. She considered, that, as a sort of inaugural rite, it would be well to select some confidant, whose counsel a literary novice might rely upon; for despite the young lady's high aspirations she was modest enough to want advice. The person who seemed best fitted for that responsible position, by nature and by occupation, was unquestionably Baldwyn. So when the aspirant's enthusiasm had grown and grown — "like a melon under a glass-bell," as Jean Paul says — till there was no more repressing it, madame sat down, and scribbled a hasty summons, which was at once transmitted per flying errand-boy to the busy gentleman in question.

Mr. Baldwyn, struck by the brevity and nervous handwriting of the missive, pictured in his mind some dreadful calamity; and the next hour brought him with anxious face into the drawing-room at Maison-de-Presles.

He was reassured at the door by some brilliant flashes of song within, and still more on entrance by the spectacle of Charlotte producing them at her piano. She was dressed in a roseate gown, significant of the new idea;

and her dusky cheeks were touched with a fine bloom of animation. Volumes of madame Guizot and madame de Souza were scattered about.

"Oh, good-morning! I am so glad to see you! I must tell you at once about the great loss that has happened to us!" cries Charlotte, springing up with her rosy face very pleasantly excited.

"Upon my word, madame, you don't show it," says Baldwyn, rather vexed. "This is a joke, I suppose; but it doesn't amuse me very greatly. Do you know I have cancelled an important engagement in order to respond at once to your note?"

"Well, I am sorry for that; but really, it is urgent! Now pray don't be angry. It is a positive fact that Mr. Romeira has run away."

"The deuce he has! (I beg your pardon.) And who is Mr. Romeira?"

"Why, the treasurer of my money in New York, you know. He took it with him. But that was not what I wanted to see you for. Madame de Presles and Eudoxie feel a great

deal worse than I do about it ; for, you see, it is not so very serious after all — we have still enough left. *This* is the serious part — I sent for you because I have an idea."

In spite of himself, Baldwyn laughed.

"That *is* serious, indeed ! Let us hear the idea," said he, his amusement dispelling his annoyance.

"But you must not begin by laughing : I am in earnest ! Would you ever have believed that I could write, invent, compose ? upon your word now, would you ?"

"Shades of the immortals ! do you mean it ?"

"It is the truth — '*je me mêle d'écrire*' — at least, I want to."

And Charlotte proceeded to unfold and dilate upon her project, justifying it by accounts of her early successes, and expressing confidence in her ability to do as much better as her added years and experience might warrant.

"I feel sure that I can write at least as well as some people who are called successful," she concluded with earnestness. "You know

my English is very fair now — I am quite at home in it — and it would not be the first instance by a good many of people succeeding to write in a foreign language. It is an old ambition of mine to be an authoress — to follow the steps of those illustrious women whose works were my first admiration," and she pointed impressively to the volumes lying around.

"But I hope," said Baldwyn, picking up the "Comtesse de Fargy" with a lengthened face, "I hope you don't meditate forming your style after the model of these fossilized ladies! Spare me from reviewing you, if such is your intention!"

"Oh, of course I understand that a very different style is required nowadays — don't be alarmed! Those are dear old friends of mine, though: I have learned a great deal from them. Some of those books are the very ones I used to pore over at school. But the expression of your face, my friend, does not suit me. It does not indicate entire sympathy with my project."

"What would you have, madame? I am taken by surprise, you know; and if you are in earnest" —

"*Dame!* after sending for you!"

"Well, no doubt you are — and I confess I *don't* feel overmuch enthusiasm at the notion. If you are going to ask my advice, I shall be likely to read you a long sermon with no end of heads, that will put you quite out of patience. You see, I don't know in the least about your talent in this line; and I can't fancy you taking kindly to the rôle of discomfited authoress."

"You are encouraging, to begin with," says Charlotte, making a pettish face. "So you know beforehand that I am going to be discomfited, if I make the venture?"

"I did not say that: I was only considering the possibilities of failure. You don't realize how numerous they are."

"Yes, I do, at once, from your solemn countenance. Come! I am not so very conceited — I don't need much 'disillusioning.' Understand that I have no hope of producing a second 'Corinne.'"

"Saints forbid! No, but here's a point. What you have to fear is even less yourself than your critics" —

"Aha! they are so sanguinary?"

"— And not alone professional critics, but the reading public. Experience shows that the pleasure of reading a book is as nothing compared with the pleasure of picking it to pieces. As the fellow says in de Musset's rhyme — 'how sweet it is to depreciate every thing!' I tell you, my dear lady, Durand understood critic nature. And, even if the book makes a sensation at first, the chances are, that, as soon as its novelty is rubbed off, people will have more to say about its defects than its merits. Why, I myself" —

"Ah, ah! no doubt! Yes, Mr. Baldwyn, you yourself are a good authority on this point. But you must set an example to the flock: they will follow your lead, perhaps, if you treat my little *bluette* kindly. Come! you shall be conciliated. I shall bribe you!"

"No use to try bribery! I am an incorruptible reviewer," said Baldwyn, laughing, and flushing a little.

"That is a rare bird too, is it not?" madame Lucas said demurely. Then, smoothing her laughing cheeks between the two brown hands

— "Let us be serious. Advise me. I am going to write: opposition will only strengthen my resolve. I *must* try the experiment, let it succeed or fail. Now, what is your counsel?"

Mr. Baldwyn looked rather nonplussed. "My counsel?" he repeated. "Well, dear madame, I see you have the articles already drawn up for me; and my part is to subscribe to them. Nothing could be more feminine. Neither could any thing be more masculine, I suppose, than to obey, and follow this peculiar method of giving advice. Therefore I advise. Go on with your *bluette*, madame, and" — changing his tone — "since you will try the thorny path of literature, I hope you may find roses enough for your compensation. Honestly, I would be glad to see you successful; and if I can be of any assistance to you — *besides* advising" —

"*Aha! c'est cela!*" cried the little lady with satisfaction. "That is reasonable! Now, don't tell anybody — not at present. It must be our secret; and, when the *bluette* is finished, it shall be handed over to you and some of our good friends, for judgment. You shall pass sentence

upon it, and decide my fate as an authoress. You agree to that?"

"I agree to that. Now may I be permitted to catch the next car to Blank Street? I might possibly be in time to make up for *rendezvous manqué*."

"No, no — nonsense! What! rush back to town in this way, on the merest chance? No, you must stay to lunch — some little confections to take away the bitter flavor of your plain speeches!"

Baldwyn staid to lunch, and was extremely amusing. But when he went out of the little court on his way homeward, his face was very long; and he forgot to take a car until he was so far into the city that it was needless. Clarens House was before his eyes when he roused from his brown study; and he turned aside there, and went in to look for his friend.

CHAPTER X.

A VALUABLE DISCOVERY.

What a fine thing is observation! and what a happy man is the observer! —V. FOURNEL.

Di chè mi fido, mi guarda Iddio!
Di chè non mi fido, mi guarderò io.

NATURALLY Joseph Fleury felt an extreme satisfaction with the arrangement which brought him under the same roof with madame Lucas, although he might suspect that his presence would be used as a convenience rather than regarded as a great pleasure. Charlotte, indeed, most generous of creatures, had, at the same time, a way of *using* her friends to suit her purposes, which was so gracious a way, however, that nobody could think of objecting. With Joseph, knowing her power over him, she was rather more arbitrary; and he shortly found himself acting as a sort of general commissioner and messenger to her lady-

ship. He had no idea of rebelling at this; on the contrary, felt it quite a delightful privilege.

But what he *did* object to was being required to execute any commissions between madame and the two gentlemen who were now favored with her special acquaintance — Messrs. Baldwyn and Schouler; and of these two, particularly the latter. For monsieur Fleury had experienced a dawning dislike to this gentleman very shortly after his introduction; and, before long, honored him with a stronger enmity than he already bestowed upon the other. Baldwyn was a haughty fellow, *bien entendu* — this new one, he observed to Eudoxie, showed no signs of excessive humility either. Your monsieur Baldwyn appeared to have tolerable success in amusing people, but he could not be called handsome; whereas this one, in addition to his social talents, had the impertinence to own a notably good-looking face and fine figure. Besides, he spoke French quite as well as Baldwyn, and even had some acquaintance with Italian — *lingua d'amore!* — did not Joseph hear him one day reading to madame Lucas from a volume of Dante? — and, worst of all, he *raffolait* of music! O misery!

All these, being so many recommendations to Charlotte's good graces, monsieur Fleury regarded as personal offences to himself. Nevertheless, he was compelled to appear amiable to Mr. Schouler, having no excuse for other behavior; though the latter's good-humored lordliness was even worse to swallow than Baldwyn's polite formality. It was crushing to be desired to transport music-books from madame to that person! but this had occurred more than once, and one could do nothing but comply. Ah, well — we should see!

Having decided to hate Mr. Schouler, Joseph's next idea was to hunt up some rational grounds for it. This was not easy. But he began to watch him secretly, with all the eager sharpness of two jealous, malicious eyes. If Joseph was shallow in some respects, he was correspondingly deep in others; and he was endowed with quite a detective genius. He showed a sudden inclination for Wolf's company, which rather surprised that gentleman; but, as the Frenchman's sociability seemed limited to a persevering though silent attention from a distance, Wolf took little notice of the

fact. This faithful study of his subject, assisted by a feminine quickness of instinct, by and by led Joseph to the conclusion that there was something unusual about Wolf, or, as he expressed it to his confidante, "there was something to be found out about him, if one could only get on the track of it."

One morning Charlotte bethought herself of some sheet-music belonging to Wolf which he had sent her to look over, and which she had promised to return.

"It was to-night he was to use it, with some of his friends," she said. "And they wanted to sing it over to-day. How stupid of me! O Joseph" — coaxingly — "are you going to your class-room pretty soon? don't you want to take the trouble of carrying home some of Mr. Schouler's music for me? It is just on your way, and it is very important he should have it this morning."

Oh, to be sure — Joseph was charmed! He departed at once, with the music under his arm and venom in his heart, wishing fervently that his patron saint might help him to a better opportunity of prying into Wolf's affairs. It

seemed shortly that the patron saint was propitious to the wish.

As Joseph went with his usual nimble feline step up the first staircase at Clarens House, he heard voices moving along the corridor above; and, reaching the landing, saw the two whom of all men in the world he detested, slowly walking away from him absorbed in conversation. They did not see him. He glanced toward Schouler's room: the door was open, as they just left it. What Joseph expected to get by it, he could not have told — perhaps the patron saint, who may have been an intriguing character, propelled him — but in he went, with a dart, noiseless as a cat. He was on his guard with an excuse, in case they returned suddenly; but they did not. He stopped for a second, and took in the interior with a turn of his eye — furs, photographs, music-racks, pistols, beer-mugs — nothing of interest enough to stay the eye except a small copy of Our Lady of the Chair, merely because that Madonna was of Charlotte's complexion precisely, though not at all resembling her. Looking about for a place to deposit his package, he approached a little

escritoire bare of every thing except inkstand and pen. No, not quite bare — an envelope partly directed was lying as though pushed aside in haste. Patron saint to the front again, inclining Joseph's head over the desk, and doubtless chuckling to see him start as if he had touched a battery.

He saw, in the plainest of handwriting, "*Mrs. Wolf Schouler*" — that simply, and the subsequent initial of a word, the writer having been perhaps interrupted at this point. As a matter of fact, Baldwyn had walked in upon his friend just here; and Wolf had put aside the letter to avoid his possible questioning.

Joseph glared at the unfortunate bit of paper with positive avarice. He would have given up his best pupils for the privilege of carrying it away, with its contents. But he was not quite so far gone yet as to steal it; and, at any rate, he was on a track. "Mrs. Wolf Schouler!" His mother? no, he had none. His wife, then! Aha! Here was a pretty bit of a reserve tool to carry about, to console one's self with by occasional feeling of its edge! If he only knew what the rest of the superscrip-

tion would be! There was a *W*, but that might stand with equal propriety for Wyoming, Wexford, or Wiesbaden. Still, he had an item; and now he must get away without being seen, music and all. He could send it up by an office-boy.

All this experience had occupied about three-quarters of a minute; before the minute was out, Joseph was at the stair-head again, but not so lucky as before. Wolf, just parting from his friend at the head of another staircase, turned suddenly, and saw him. The amateur burglar having sense enough to stop short, Wolf evidently supposed he had just come up and was waiting for him; and advanced with a friendly nod.

"Ah! good-morning, Mr. Fleury," said he, in unconscious good-humor. "Come in, won't you? glad to see you!"

"No — no, thank you," replied Joseph, rather nervously. "Some other time — much obliged — merely came to return some music of yours, from madame Lucas."

"Ah, yes! — thank you: I was half expecting it this morning. You're very kind. So I

can't induce you to come in for a moment —no? My thanks to madame Lucas." And Wolf turned back to his room, wondering if the Frenchman were really as bashful as he seemed.

Joseph was exceedingly glad to get away, and appeared so *exalté* in his class that the pupils thought he must have been taking an over-allowance of wine somewhere. The hour up, he went home like the wind, having no intention of revealing his secret at present, but eager to continue observations of everybody in general, with an exhilarating sense of its possession — as the pirate-captive of the drama is sometimes seen to pat the handle of his dirk-knife, stuck with subtlety inside his waistband. The idea tickled his fancy so that he found himself walking along with one hand buried under his vest-front, grasping the chimerical handle of that hidden weapon.

As he arrived, and opened the gate, he noticed a curly head or two bobbing past the window, and recollected that Charlotte had sent for several of her tiny friends to luncheon that morning. She had a pleasant fancy for enter-

taining now and then a party of these little people, who all considered her house a substantial kind of Fairyland, and herself the most satisfactory of fairies.

Joseph let himself in quietly, and stopped by the nearest door to peep into the music-room. Charlotte was not there: she had gone to oversee the preparations for her small guests' refreshment, leaving them under Mrs. Lake's careful eye. That lady was chatting in the distance with Mr. Gregory, who had looked in for a moment's survey of the little ones. The portière in the middle of the room had been drawn out of the way, making a long hall for the children's benefit. They had been romping and dancing till they were tired of it, and now were settled down in a picturesque little huddle under the windows — a half-dozen or so of heads, yellow and bronze, with a flowery grouping of many-colored dresses. Davey Lake, who was very fond of story-telling, had the centre of the swarm, and was just rounding off some tale of terror — partly derived from his own fancy, and partly extracted from a newspaper — for the entertainment of his

playmates, whose eyes and mouths were all wide open in alarm.

"— An' the robber was shot and fatally killed!" concluded the narrator, looking around impressively, and quite satisfied with the effect of his climax. A smothered "o-o-oh!" went up from the circle, the little girls scattering quickly to avoid any more such awful consummations.

Joseph slipped on to the next door, and paused there to catch a bit of the older people's conversation. They had drifted around somehow, in their usual fashion, to art-matters; and Mr. Gregory seemed to be casting reproach, in his civilly dogmatic manner, on some theory of Mrs. Lake's, which she briskly defended.

"Why, my dear lady," he was saying with sober emphasis, "it really is unworthy of your talent, this depreciation of landscape which I understand you to express! *Can* a person of your intelligence, and sensibility to the beautiful and the natural, actually stand unmoved before

> . . . 'the stars
> Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
> The flower and tree . . . the stationary rocks,
> The moving waters and the invisible air'?"

"Pshaw!" returned Mrs. Lake, who, in spite of her ethereal person and flaxen coronet, was occasionally moved to speak with pronounced bluntness: "I'm not disputing the beauty of all those items, in their way: but show me a fine head or an interesting face or a picturesque grouping; and its background may be an 'unenduring cloud' or a brown woollen curtain, for all the notice I shall take of it, except *as* a background. Why! do you suppose I would rather make a study of passive stumps and rocks than a study of my frisky elf with the soul of mischief winking in his two little eyes? Come here, my David, and show us something better to paint than any landscape!"

"David is an impressive argument," replied Mr. Gregory, as the "elf" approached jauntily, with an evident hope of sugar-plums; "but how can you, my dear madam, in the presence of this gorgeous jewel, profess such indifference to its kindred?" and he pointed to Charlotte's most treasured little picture, hanging up among the leaves.

"Ah!" said the lady, with a gay shrug, "in the face of St. Diaz and St. Rousseau and St.

Corot, I suppose I am a heretic, and ought to be *anathema*. That is a very fine picture: it looks just as though a hole had been cut in the wall to let us look at a real sunset! But I know where there is a finer picture, in this very house; and I believe you will agree with me when I indicate it. There — see! it is coming into the room this minute!"

As she spoke, Charlotte was parting the curtains of the archway, and entering with her very sweetest look of welcome. Mr. Gregory turned on his companion an appreciative smile.

"You take unassailable ground there, madam," he said, bowing good-naturedly.

Joseph glided away again, indisposed to enter. He met Eudoxie in the passage-way, carrying a tray of *sucreries* to the dining-room. Instead of speaking to her as usual, he stared straight at her, with a most unaccountable grin, and then burst into a long but silent laugh, which was so very alarming in its character that she was near dropping her tray, and hurried away from him as fast as possible.

CHAPTER XI.

FORTUNE-TELLING *AL FRESCO.*

Aimerais-tu les fleurs, les prés et la verdure,
Les sonnets de Pétrarque et le chant des oiseaux,
Michel-Ange et les arts, Shakspeare et la nature,
Si tu n'y retrouvais quelques anciens sanglots?

THEY had early summer in St. Leon. The spring months slipped off, swift and steadily milder; and, before they knew it, the Lotos-eaters found their circle broken, and the individual members put to flight by the arrival of "summer holidays."

Mr. Gregory was gone on a long tour among the Sierras, with friends. Mrs. Lake had taken her satellite Jenny Winter, and started, under Master Davey's command, for a village in the midst of Eastern hills, where there was said to be much opportunity for making studies, rather of animate than of inanimate nature. Baldwyn also went eastward on business,

though to a different quarter; and Wolf went with him. Justus O'Brien was of the last to leave: he looked wistfully after Baldwyn and his fellow-traveller — for whom the warm-hearted "Kildare man" had conceived quite a romantic fondness, not unmixed with a mild envy of the other's graces and *savoir parler* — but finally joined a party, and went "camping out," as the best means of exercising his super-abundant muscle.

Before these left on their various journeyings, however, they held a little reunion in the garden-hall, and made a compact to meet — so many of them as might find it possible — for a week or so together in some specified place, at the very end of the season, arriving, as nearly as they could, on a certain day. As for Charlotte, she astonished them all by announcing her intention of remaining where she was until that time of meeting, in the enjoyment of absolute seclusion.

"What an idea!" said the chorus.

"You had better go East with me," Mrs. Lake advised. "It's a cool place where we are going; and you'll be roasted in this hot city — *Charlotte rôtie*, as it were!"

"Oh, no, I sha'n't!" laughed Charlotte. "*Point du tout!* I like heat: I'm something of a tropical bird, you know — impervious to it. And I shall like to be alone for a while. Joseph has been invited away with some musical friends; and Eudoxie and I will keep quiet under madame de Presles' wing."

Joseph did not appear enchanted with the prospect, although he had agreed to go.

"Have we bored you so this winter that you are sick of humanity altogether?" inquired Wolf facetiously.

"That is it," said Charlotte, nodding gravely at him. "But by the last of September I shall be dying to see you all again; and you will see I shall be the first one on hand."

Baldwyn thought he knew why she had made this decision, especially as she glanced at him once or twice with a twinkling intention in her brown eye.

"Yes," she said afterwards to him, apart from the others: "I am going to write this summer. I have been scribbling all along, at intervals, since the day we talked it over; but now I am going to use my leisure, and finish up in good earnest."

"You amaze me! I thought you had forgotten all about it," said Baldwyn wickedly.

"Oh, no, my friend, you did not!" she retorted. "You hoped I would, but it was a vain hope. And you remember what you promised to do for me? Well, in autumn, if all goes well, your critical services will be required."

Those summer days passed very pleasantly for Charlotte. In years after she would call up the remembrance of their long, dreamy hours, the hot world outside curtained away, and herself resting or moving lazily about in garments sweeping as lightly as vapor, some happy consciousness always haunting and nestling vague and sweet at her heart. Part of the time she staid in the garden-hall, where the light was faint, and a soft air blew through constantly; but she liked still better to write in her own room above — a large rose-tinted room, with green shrubbery forcing itself in at the balcony windows — where she lay whole mornings, summoning and linking together her thoughts before putting them on paper. Of the result she was not at all confident;

but there was such a fascination — a sort of lazy charm — in the manner of her work, that she truly felt very little concern for any thing beyond this long shade-sheltered day-dream, with its accompanying visions of Fame and Fortune — for which, poor thing, she was no more to blame than anybody else similarly dazzled. Her two companions wondered and were a little anxious about her; though when she explained to madame de Presles, that fond guardian was instantly assured of her success.

A placid summer of fair fancies! so gratefully placid that she was startled and almost sorry when September came, bringing close at hand the day set for the reunion. They had fixed, for the scene of that event, on a pretty village not very far from St. Leon; a quiet place with beautiful scenery, unspoiled yet by "summer hotels," with only one or two available cottages for the temporary abider. Mrs. Lake had written to this pleasant place before her flitting, and engaged rooms enough for the feminine Lotos-eaters for a week. Her eastern trip at an end, she had come straight here without showing herself to Charlotte or any

St. Leonites at all: so that the meeting might not be anticipated, she said, by a dusty, insipid city greeting.

She was a day or two in advance of the others, and employed this time in rambling about with Jenny Winter through bewilderingly pretty wood-paths, terminating often in the most wonderful sunsets or moon-rises; by turns carrying back armfuls of wild creepers to trim up the rooms of madame Lucas and her party, and running to take a reassuring glimpse of Master Davey, whose spirits were at their highest tide this summer, and found the widest sweep among these cornfields and orchards. So when Charlotte and her two companions were driven up to the cottage, the first human head that presented itself was Mrs. Lake's golden one, unbonneted and radiant; and the second was Davey's, flying from a distant feast of milk and honey in a friendly pantry to meet his adored mamma Charlotte.

"Ah my dear Helena! ah my Davey *bien-aimé!*" Charlotte cries, skipping down like a school-girl to receive the honey-smeared hugs of her favorite.

"My dear Charlotte! how has the summer gone with you? are you well?"

"Oh, it was a sweet summer! I was very happy; but I missed you all along — and these two brown eyes here! Another hug, sticky boy!"

And then Jenny Winter appeared, and the others were properly greeted in their turn; and "Where's Mr. Fleury?" Mrs. Lake asked, looking at the empty wagon. "Did you leave him behind?"

"Ah, *Dieu merci*, my sweet Helena! he couldn't come!" said Charlotte in a merry whisper, her eyes glimmering naughtily. "Do you know, he was at a sea-side place with his friends, and they used to go in swimming; but last week he took a little cramp in the cold water, and it made him sick — that blessed little cramp — so that he could not come back to St. Leon to go with us! We were very sorry, you know — for me, I was desolate; but we could not wait for him. Ah the poor Joseph! Ha, ha!"

"You wicked creature!" Helena said, laughing also. "How disappointed the poor fellow must have felt!"

"Well, truly, I should be more sorry for him; but he has changed so much since last year — he has taken such singular habits of looking black and gloomy, and he has such odd ways with his eyes that I think sometimes there is something wrong in his head. Poor Joseph! And it is quite a relief to have him away for a while."

Joseph, indeed, lying ill and generally miserable at a little watering-place, far away from madame Lucas and his post of observation, felt very positively that there was something wrong with him. He was well cared for by his friends, but it is to be feared they did not find him the most grateful of invalids. That little secret of his lay like a dead weight on him — a useless weapon enough for the time being. He ground his teeth, and got into a high fever, thinking of Wolf Schouler, and mentally seeing him stroll about, with that good-humored, insouciant way of carrying his shoulders which always secretly infuriated Joseph, by the side of madame Lucas, perhaps singing to her in his *maudit* tenor — Alas! if corporeally Joseph had been as strong as the language he wasted on his unresponsive

pillow, Charlotte's respite from his presence would have been but short. As it was, he was fixed there, unhappy Frenchman, for a week or more; while Wolf, in expectant mood, was whizzing by swiftest steam toward his temporary Mecca.

The ladies had talked themselves weary, and gone out to explore the country, and returned to an early dinner, and gone to explore again, before Wolf arrived. Late in the afternoon, sitting in a quiescent group on the porch-steps — madame de Presles with her *tricot* presenting the only occupied figure among them — they saw him coming up the lane, shouldering his little portmanteau, and blithely waving his hat. He was very brown after his travels, and looked rather more muscular; and his bearded face shone with the most delighted of smiles as they ran down to meet him.

"Why did you walk? How dusty you are!" they exclaimed, after their welcome.

"Wagon was too slow. I left my traps, and took a short cut," he said, shaking his travelling-coat. "The road was remarkably pretty."

"And Mr. Baldwyn?" the ladies asked.

"I'm very sorry, but I haven't got him with me. Some stupid business or other kept him. I was waiting for him in Philadelphia, and he sent me this telegram: *'Detained at last minute. Go ahead: follow you in three days,'*" said Wolf, reading it off. "And so I'm the only representative of the sterner sex yet among you, am I?"

"Except David," answered Charlotte. "We didn't expect Mr. Gregory, did we? his journey was to be so long."

"No: he'll not be back this winter. And I met O'Brien as I came through the city: we shall see him to-night, I hope."

Fleury's mishap and absence did not appear to act as a severe disappointment on Wolf, nor, indeed, on any of the others, unless it were Eudoxie, who moped somewhat, and would have liked to go and nurse him if she had dared.

Fair skies and sunshine seemed provided by special arrangement for them from the first, in their rustic halting-place. They managed to get possession of two conveyances and two horses, all equally remarkable as to build, and

went gypsying in good Bohemian style, but as "gilt-edged" Bohemians, with every appliance for comfort, from tiger-skins and pocket-libraries to *chocolat praliné* and the elements of punch in the most complex of punch-bowls.

"Ah!" said Wolf emotionally, as they were disposing themselves with these accessories under the trees where they had chosen to encamp, "after all, this is the true way to live! How reasonable is old Jean-Jacques in advocating the free existence of the savage! — 'I ask you whether the civilized or the natural life is more like to become insupportable to those who lead it? Has any one ever heard of a savage at liberty who thought to complain of his life or to seek death?' Are we ever as actually happy in our artificial city-life, as we may be in these charming primitive conditions?"

"By Jove! he calls this primitive!" murmured O'Brien, depositing the punch-bowl, which had been intrusted to his special care, and examining its internal structure with solicitude.

"If Mr. Baldwyn were here, he would snub you for that rhapsody," observed Mrs. Lake. "He detests Rousseau."

"So do I, a little," said Charlotte. "I know a more reasonable sentence from another of our French authors, like this: 'believe me, man is not made to sleep in the lap of Nature: he must have beneath him carpets, wrappings'"—

"*Und so weiter!*" interrupted Wolf impolitely. "It was a woman who wrote that, I imagine."

"Yes, it was," replied Charlotte. "But she put it into a man's mouth. As for you, you disdain, of course, all such fastidiousness"—sweeping her hand maliciously over the furs with which they had upholstered the "lap of Nature." And Jenny Winter put in shyly from behind Mrs. Lake —

"Doesn't madame de Staël say somewhere that we are never happy unless we do what is conventional, since Society rules over our happiness?"

"Oh! that, now, was a contemptible little sentiment of madame de Staël's, if she said it in earnest!" exclaimed Mrs. Lake emphatically. "Excuse me, Charlotte; but I always thought there was something a trifle limited about that woman, much as I admire her."

"If you want me to argue it," said Charlotte suavely, propping her head on the furry paws of the tiger-skin, "you shall be disappointed. I will argue with nobody, about nothing. This air is too soothing: it makes one languid, and ready to agree with everybody."

"Truly," Wolf said, staring up at the soft blue overhead between the netted branches, "it seems almost like the garden-hall transported out of doors."

Wolf never travelled without his pet books; and now, as he lay down luxuriously on his rug, he shook out quite an armful of them at Charlotte's feet.

"Ah! what are all these?" she said, glancing them over: "Schiller — Heine — Halm — what quantities of German! — Richter — two or three volumes of him, in translation — Chateaubriand — *ah, grand merci, monsieur Schouler!* Do you propose to read us all to sleep with these?"

"I thought you might like to hear a bit," he said meekly, "while Mrs. Lake is at her sketching."

He was very fond of reading aloud from his

favorite authors; and he read extremely well, as they all knew.

"Oh, yes! do read us something!" they cried unanimously; and Justus admonished him, "Read English, you know, Schouler."

Wolf took up a volume of Richter, and began to read at random:

"'Does, then, the heaven of our existence, like the blue one over our heads, consist of mere empty air, which, when near to, and in little, is a transparent nothing; and which only in distance, and in gross, becomes blue ether?'"

"Why, how appropriate! but, at the same time, how dolorous!" exclaimed Charlotte. "It was odd that you hit upon that sentence; but we don't want to hear any thing philosophical now, do we? nor any thing melancholy. Hadn't you better read something else?"

"Why! does that strike you as so very melancholy? It is only a suggestion, and a very poetical one, I think."

"And then," Mrs. Lake added, touching at her sketch with a thoughtful air, "it is true that there is an element of sadness in every

thing beautiful; still that does not injure our enjoyment of it, but often rather causes it. I have a favorite rhyme — from de Musset, whom Charlotte loves — which expresses the identical thought. I won't quote you the stanza, but in plain prose it runs so: 'Wouldst thou love the flowers and the green meadows, the sonnets of Petrarca and the song of birds, Michel-Angelo and the arts, Shakespeare and Nature, had'st thou found there no trace of ancient tears?'"

"O Helena!" sighed Charlotte, shutting her eyes.

"That is not so extravagant as it sounds," Wolf said, having glided into one of his dreamy moods. "He might have ended his verse as well — 'could'st thou find there no shadow of future tears.' It is as haunting a shadow as the other, and no less *geist-bewegend.*"

"Now what does he mean by that?" said O'Brien in a rueful undertone.

"We are getting to be as intelligible as Novalis," Mrs. Lake observed with a laugh.

"As mournful and mysterious as two

sphinxes of the desert!" added Charlotte, pulling the tiger's paws together under her dimple-dented chin, and making a pettish face over them. "And I don't believe you know what you mean, either. Why should you want traces of tears, past or future, in the songs of birds and the flowers of the meadow? What a wretched idea! I don't believe you want tears in your future, any more than I do. If I should tell your fortune now, you would be as anxious as possible to have all the tears left out of it!"

"Can you tell fortunes?" asked Wolf, with a smile.

"Oh, yes!" Charlotte said gravely. "I can read them out of people's hands. I studied that in Desbarolles' 'Palmistry,' in the convent. Madame de Presles remembers catching me at it, and scolding me, but all in vain — *n'est-ce-pas que vous vous en souvenez, chère madame?*" and she chattered it all over in French for the benefit of madame de Presles, who smiled silently, and remembered very well.

"Really, now, can you?" asked Mrs. Lake, putting out her slender palm. "Then, you may read my fortune for me, if you please."

Charlotte surveyed it carefully, tracing its lines with a slow forefinger, and drawing her long eyebrows together in sibylline fashion.

"Oh, for a moment of Mrs. Lake's power," Wolf exclaimed, "to fix that group on paper! I have seen all the sibyls of Rome, and many a modern witch; but I never saw a better composition than we have before us!"

The autumn sun, resting softly upon the two figures, warmed and deepened their color, and gave them such lustre as falls on the people of Claude's golden visions: it sprinkled the wind-flushed cheeks and loose brown hair of the gypsy, the amaranth-hued scarf carelessly wrapped around her shoulders, the tawny yellow of the striped furs on which she reclined; and it played also, but with intercepted brightness, on the slim bending shape of the fortune-seeker, finding its way under her wide hat-brim to touch the glistening, rolled-up braids. Even Justus O'Brien, who had no fellowship in the masonry of Art, was moved to appreciation of this wonderfully happy chance-picture; and mutely observed it with uncommon ardor in his eye.

"I see a quiet life here," Charlotte said at length, raising her head with a smile. "A quiet, undisturbed life, with even health and no losses of friends. See how long and smooth the life-line runs! I never saw a smoother palm. And you have a good temper, Helena, and you are not deceitful nor treacherous."

"Thank you for that, fair oracle! Do you really believe your own soothsaying? and do you really see all that in my hand?"

"Oh, yes! I see it in your hand. I cannot find you any thing exciting or romantic here, it is so fair and unmarked a hand — a fortune to be envied, *belle Hélena!*"

"How is it with your own hand, then? Can you read your own fortune?"

"Surely; and so far my fate has followed the lines — faithfully. A dull road all along for the first years; then a change to prosperity, with much happiness ensuing."

"*Et puis*" —

"I don't like to look too long on the face of Destiny, especially my own."

"That means that you see a stroke of ill-luck ahead somewhere," Wolf said. "Will your

sibylship interpret mine, please?" advancing the requisite member, well-shaped, and indicating some nervous strength, but rather white and fine-skinned for a masculine hand. Charlotte took it with light finger-tips; and, after a moment's study, tossed it away with an odd little laugh.

"I would rather interpret its upper surface," she said, throwing herself back on the tiger-skins: "there it indicates that you ought to have a comfortable life — whether you get it or not! — and its proper occupation is unmistakably performing on musical instruments. I wish you would tell me how you contrive to keep it so white," she added, with a disparaging pinch of her own brown fingers.

"Now, what in the world did you see there?" asked Wolf curiously. "I want to know my fortune, good or bad. It's at your mercy — do be gracious to me!"

Mrs. Lake shot a quick glance from under her hat-brim; but the young man's face expressed nothing whatever, his long eyelashes being dropped with an investigating air toward the mysterious palm-lines.

"Why, it is a good fortune enough!" returned the disciple of Desbarolles evasively. "Oh, well, I suppose it is all an absurdity, this system! I don't believe it really, of course: I used to amuse myself with it in Paris, but it is foolish stuff *tout de même.*"

"Of course it is," chimed in Justus, who was getting very restive at all this fanciful talk. "Where are those hampers? *Would* it be too terrestrial to inquire if nobody is hungry? perhaps, Schouler, you'll be able to find some 'traces of tears' in the punch I've been making while you were off in the clouds."

"No—no salt in mine, if you please!" Wolf said, rousing up. "Truly, O'Brien, I would the gods had made thee poetical!"

"It *is* a pity they hadn't," said Justus, taking the snub good-naturedly; and Davey, returning at the top of his speed from a butterfly-hunt, demanded to be fed in a manner which admitted no delay. The idealists descended to practicalities at once; madame de Presles, who only came to the front in such cases, abandoning her knitting-needles to compose a hasty *mayonnaise,* with the ardent co-operation of the entire party.

It was not until that night, after a lounge in the moonlit porch, that Helena found an opportunity to indulge her curiosity about the fortune-telling incident. Slipping into Charlotte's room up stairs she found that little lady, with long hair flying over her bare shoulders, propped on the window-sill, and listening to the melancholy "*craik, craik*" of the katydids.

"Do tell me, Charlotte, what you saw in Mr. Schouler's hand, and why you refused to tell it to him," Helena asked, leaning out beside her.

"Well," said Charlotte slowly, "I did not want to tell him, because — it was a very bad fortune — not a good one at all! and it looked as if he would have only a short life — oh, a very short life indeed!"

"Why, silly child! you don't really believe that, do you? And why shouldn't you have told him? it would not have made the least impression on him, I'm sure."

"No. But — I did not like the idea myself," Charlotte answered, looking around at her companion.

And presently she broke into a low laugh, and said, hanging with both hands on Helena's

shoulder, "you have no doubt about my being very silly, have you, dear?"

"I think you are a very unusual child, Charlotte; but I can't fancy that you positively put any faith in those ridiculous theories about 'lines of life' and 'crosses' and all that."

"No? Well, perhaps I do not; but I have seen some very singular things to confirm those theories. Now, in my 'life-line,' at the point where I stopped, there is a cross, a large one — signifying a loss or great affliction of some kind."

Charlotte was entirely serious, but Mrs. Lake permitted herself a hearty laugh.

"Ah, Helena!" the little Frenchwoman said, leaning against her with a faint echo of the laugh, "I think sometimes that I ought to be very happy: and yet, do you know, only about half the time I am happy lately; and the other half I am visited by the 'black butterflies,' as we call them. But you are so sensible — you will help me drive them away, won't you?"

"To be sure I will! Come and look at Davey asleep — that sight is pretty enough to drive away the blackest butterfly that ever haunted you!"

Davey lay in the candlelight with one hand curled under his cheek, the other rising and falling gently over his little heart, and a look of solemn content on his round, sun-flushed face. Charlotte watched him with tender eyes for a moment, and then, bending down, touched her lips lightly to his tumbled hair.

"He was tired to-night, poor fellow! Really, how much he looks like Mr. Schouler, after all, now that his eyes are closed, doesn't he?" said Mrs. Lake, not without some sly intention in her glance.

"Yes," Charlotte said, flitting away to her own room with a covert smile, "I think he does."

CHAPTER XII.

HOW MR. BALDWYN RETURNED, AND CLIMBED A HILL.

Es glaenzt so schoen die sinkende Sonne,
Doch schoener ist deiner Augen Schein.
Das Abendroth und deine Augen
Sie strahlen mir traurig ins Herz hinein.

—HEINE.

BALDWYN felt it to be a great annoyance that his affairs should keep him at the East, even for a day or two, after Wolf had left to rejoin their friends. He could not drive away some slight misgivings in relation to that young man; not that he had the faintest doubt of his rectitude, but he knew Wolf to be impulsive, and occasionally visited by a wilful opaqueness of mental vision which might effect undesirable complications, himself not being at hand to warn.

Three days were not much, however. Bald-

wyn was a cool-tempered fellow; meeting the unavoidable, he made the best of it, and gave no less consideration than usual to the ordering of his dinner and the quality of his wine. The inconvenient business being despatched as soon as possible, he faced about toward the Mississippi; and three days behind Wolf, as promised, he had reached the little country station, and was riding through quiet lanes toward the cottage.

That afternoon the party, instead of going for a drive, had decided to take a sunset stroll, choosing a certain hill as their limit, so that, if Baldwyn should arrive in the mean time, he might follow them there. They rambled on slowly, disposed to enjoy the still, summer-like air and the fine stretch of vaporous hills and green levels on every side, which Justus — amiably bearing the individual burdens of the party in the form of shawls, etc. — declared to be as green as the fields around "Dublun." The little hill of their choice was quite near: it was rather a rugged and shrubby little hill; and they presently found themselves straggling up its side in some weariness, getting scattered

as they stopped here and there to take breath. Wolf and Charlotte were first to reach the woody plateau at its summit. Not being much fatigued they pushed across through the crowding tree-stems, and came into a clearer space on the verge of the downward slope.

The autumn vineyards were lying beneath them, flushed by the western light, their distant edges melting into the golden arc of hills, and those again melting into the brilliancy beyond.

The two gazers drew a quick breath of admiration. All the hill-side below, and quite an area at its base, were overgrown with trees, so densely that the lessening radiance could not enter their narrow aisles. In one of these dim paths something stirred and ran out hastily — a little brown rabbit, sitting up to inspect the bright view with his soft, sidelong gaze. This patch of austere woodland lay in sharp contrast against its fair environment, like a beauty-spot on the blooming face of the landscape.

"See 'where the sun is silent!'" cried Wolf, pointing down at those shadows, and wondering if Charlotte would remember his readings of Dante, and how they had paused to comment

on that fanciful line. She did remember it, he saw by her responsive glance.

"But that is not so fearful a beast as the one which frightened our poet," she said, with an amused look toward the rabbit. "*Qu'il ferait une bonne gibelotte, cette bête-là!*"

As if he could hear this hard-hearted suggestion, the rabbit turned and went with a startled whisk back into his more familiar world.

"You take all the poetry out of it," said Wolf, throwing himself down among the shrubs, and leaning on his elbow.

"Oh, no! that would be impossible," Charlotte answered, with another long sigh of admiration as she settled herself against a tree in great content. There was perfect calm in the air: the voices of their friends reached them in faint murmurs from another point of the hill-side. It was so pleasant a calm that neither of them would break it for a while. Wolf's great gray eyes, fixed on the west, seemed to absorb its fervid glow; but there was a look of abstraction in them too, which Charlotte noticed, presently looking down at him.

"Where have your thoughts wandered now?"

she inquired. "Are you still thinking about your fortune?"

"No. I don't dare to think about it."

"Why! *you* are not superstitious! How do you know it will not be a delightful fortune?"

"I know better than you do what it will be, madame sibyl, and without studying Desbarolles too."

"You anticipate a bad one, then?"

"A bad one — yes."

"Ah! what a pity you have taken such an idea in your head! a superstitious fancy. Now, *I* am never superstitious," said Charlotte stoutly, to convince herself of the fact. "I should not permit myself to be so, although I can read many unpropitious signs in my hand."

"You can?"

"Oh, yes! but, as I said, it is all nonsense. *You* must not take those fancies. You are a little blue, as you call it, to-day: you have *les papillons noirs*. Now, think of being blue in such weather as this, in face of such a scenery! Unreasonable! But we are all of us unreasonable, it is true. How we are always grumbling about our unhappiness! and at the same time

we cannot tell what great happiness some one of the four winds may be blowing to us."

"I can think of no possible happiness," said Wolf, with a grim quietness of brow, "that could make up to me for the misfortune of being obliged to exist at all."

The abrupt simplicity of this observation quite frightened Charlotte. There was no doubt that he said it in earnest; and the contrast between it and his usual breezy manner was no greater than the change of expression in his clouded and listless face. Was it possible that yesterday he was quizzing Justus O'Brien, playing the tease with the whole party, chasing Davey out of breath in the field, singing romantic ballads for the ladies, with a side-smile at his own pathos?

"Oh, pray don't say such dismal things!" she said coaxingly. "Don't you know how I dislike to be made melancholy? Come, *viva l'allegria!* Sing me something — a little student's song if you like — any thing to make us gay."

"If I sing, the others will hear me," Wolf said, looking up with a sudden bright glance of mischief.

"And supposing they do" — said Charlotte; and then stopped short, thinking herself rather stupid. "But repeat something, at least. This is just the place for listening to poetry — oh, that mist! that lovely haze that settles on the vine-rows — look! Is not your memory full of rhymes and songs?"

Wolf considered for a moment, playing with the grass-tufts under his hand, and began to repeat directly, in a slow and absent voice, never looking away from that golden perspective —

"'Es glaenzt so schoen die sinkende Sonne,
Doch schoener ist deiner Augen Schein.
Das Abendroth und deine Augen
Sie strahlen mir traurig ins Herz hinein.

Das Abendroth bedeutet Scheiden,
Und Herzensnacht und Herzensweh'!
Bald fliesset zwischen meinem Herzen
Und deinen Augen die weite See.'"

Charlotte followed the soft intonations of his voice with delight, but could only translate a word or two here and there.

"That is very musical," said she; "I am sure it is a charming sonnet: but remember, I can-

not understand your German, although I am ready to confess that the author was right who called it the most beautiful language in Europe. I caught something about the 'sinking sun' and 'heart's woe;' but you must translate it for me if you want me to enjoy it."

"No," said Wolf: "then you would enjoy it still less. You wanted a gay rhyme, but there is none such in my head just now. See, at last the sun has gone down! — it has gone down" — he repeated to himself, his voice dropping to an indistinct murmur.

Charlotte had however received a clearer impression of the verses than she admitted: somehow she knew what they meant, so that she could easily have given the substance of them in her own language. But she could not comprehend this mood of her companion: she was quite at a loss for something to say to him — an uncommon experience for the bright and ready madame Lucas.

It was during this not altogether joyous converse that Baldwyn, having arrived at the cottage and been apprised of his friends' whereabouts, started after them, and was speedily

surmounting the hill with his long strides. He heard the hum of voices from some unseen point, but, uncertain where, stepped across the bushy platform with light movements, disposed to take them by surprise. And parting the branches softly before him, lo! a little clearing — and in it, most familiar to his eyes, but somehow, just then, most startling, two figures, quietly settled on the slope, and looking at the view.

There was nothing unusual in finding such a couple — a most discreet-looking pair certainly — the lady sitting on a log with her hands folded, the gentleman lying tranquilly at a sociable distance, with his hat on the ground. There was no evident reason why a newly-arrived friend should not step in upon them at once, enjoying their surprise and their ready welcome. But Baldwyn did not. He stood looking down upon them, leaning against a tree — a tall, motionless, travel-dusty figure, cautiously holding apart the branches lest their rustling should draw the notice of the pair below. Then, still more carefully than he had come, he moved away, and followed the hum-

ming voices again till they led him among the larger group, to whom he had no hesitation in revealing himself.

They received him with the most flattering delight, Justus in particular behaving very much like Davey in his demonstrative joy.

"And Mr. Schouler and madame Lucas not on hand to get their share of the surprise!" exclaimed Mrs. Lake. "They are close by somewhere. They are nimble climbers, and got well in advance of us, coming up. Call them, Mr. O'Brien."

Justus's mighty voice, assisted by Baldwyn's whistle and Davey's shrill whoops, brought up the stragglers at once, also overjoyed at the meeting.

There was not a shade of change visible in any one's manner or aspect — as light, as friendly, as unrestrained as ever: they sang like gypsies, going home across the fields — Davey carried high and dry from the gathering dews on Wolf's shoulder; and they had a merry evening of it, running through the summer's experiences again for Baldwyn's benefit, and laughing at his odd synopsis of his own

travels. But when he was left alone that night, in his room at a neighboring cottage, he felt no sleep in his eyes; and, instead of lying down he went out and took a tramp in the dewy darkness, having left a candle at his window by way of substitute for the North Star, which was obscured.

And as he walked he said to himself musingly and reproachfully —

"I have made a mistake. What is to be done?" This question pursued him through his tardy dreams, spreading into quite a nightmare of interrogation; but no answer offered itself.

Apparently there was nothing to be done.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VERDICT OF THREE.

Where they do agree, their unanimity is wonderful!
—SHERIDAN: *The Critic.*

WHEN the frosts came again to St. Leon, nipping Charlotte's hedges and causing the orange-trees and other dainty foreigners of the garden to be hurried within doors, she held her "idea" under lock and key in her escritoire, written out in her most business-like script, and shrewdly devoid of ribbon-bows and all other ornamental weakness, such as she had heard that novices were liable to. Somehow the afflatus which, together with those soft summer airs, had expanded the *bluette* to its present dimensions, seemed in departing to carry with it any complacency which the authoress might have felt in her work. She gave no sign of that to Baldwyn, though, but simply put the manuscript into his hands, saying —

"When you and the others have passed judgment upon it, bring them all up here to pronounce the verdict."

Baldwyn in some way received the impression that it was a very absorbing affair to her; and having also the impression that she was destined to disappointment, carried away a considerable burden of anxiety along with the MS.

Walking into Wolf's room at about lunch-time, he found that gentleman taking a light refreshment, and deeply engrossed in the society of a small but intelligent member of the family *Simiadæ*, whom he had fraternally seated by himself, and provided with a plate and glass. The guest's attention was confined principally to his well-filled dish of biscuit, from which he supplied himself steadily, with the restless and dolorous blink peculiar to his tribe.

"Where on earth did you get that monkey?" said Baldwyn, looking at it from the doorway with great disfavor.

"Isn't he delightful?" exclaimed Wolf enthusiastically. "I borrowed him from a man in the hotel, stopping here for a week or so. Just

observe his attitude! Hasn't he a clever phiz? Mr. Blondin, his name is — Mr. Blondin, from the Caribbees. Regular little miniature of a Man and a Brother, don't you think?"

"What an inconsistent fellow you are, Wolf! You're fastidious beyond reason in some things — ready to faint if a fiddle goes wrong in a Haydn symphony, and as sulky as Fleury himself if you have to talk to a woman with a homely face, or a bad taste in perfumery. And here you are entertaining the most repulsive little brute in creation, and asking me to admire its ugliness! That's what I call inconsistency."

"Well, I admit that his beauty is not faultless. But it's so human, after all! And Mr. Blondin is a very cultured person. See here! he's been taught how to use a drinking-glass," said Wolf, filling a tiny one, and offering it to his protégé. The long-tailed gourmand drank off its contents with most gentleman-like readiness, and having set down the glass, returned instantly to the biscuit, and decimated them as before with an air of mournful concentration.

"He used to be very fond of *liqueurs* till

his master made him tipsy once with anisette, and now he won't touch any but common red wine."

But the consideration of Mr. Blondin's extraordinary talents failed to prepossess Baldwyn, who had an uncommon degree of repugnance for all that agile family.

"Well, tie up your friend somewhere, now," said he: "I want to sit down, and haven't any idea of doing so with that evil spirit around loose. I want to consult you about something."

"All right," said Wolf, leading away his charge, and securing its chain to a heavy chair, well removed from all things breakable. "Now come and take a bit of something. I've taken a fancy for lunching up here in preference to table-d'hôte. Rather miscellaneous kind of lunch, you see: I get whatever I happen to think of. Try a glass of this *Pontet Canet:* it's very good. — Did you say you wanted to see me about something particular?"

"I have just come from madame Lucas's," said Baldwyn, dropping into a chair by the little lunch-tray, and trifling with his goblet.

"Ah?"

"What do you suppose she has been doing now?"

"Quarrelling with Joseph, possibly."

"You never saw her quarrelling with anybody. I believe she is utterly incapable of it."

"I saw her reproving him quite vigorously the other day, for saying something that was not just to her taste; and he walked off looking as black as an eclipse. Nice fellow to keep in the house with one! — But what *has* she been doing? Disposing of some new victim 'as kindly as the fisher hooks the worm, pitying him the while'?"

"Worse than that! She's been writing a book."

"*What!* madame Lucas? Oh, come! what a poor joke that is, now!"

"But it's no joke at all, I'm sorry to say. She really has — and here's the manuscript in my pocket."

"Why, I'm perfectly astounded! — And what are *you* doing with the manuscript? does she want you to criticise it for her?"

"You and I, and a council of our peers, if we please. O'Brien, I think, will do."

"What ever put the idea into her head! — But after all, why shouldn't she write, though, if she wants to? I'm sure she is remarkably clever, and she has a good command of the language."

"But that isn't all that is requisite, you know. I haven't looked at the MS. yet, but I have a pre-conviction that it's not meant for success."

"Well, now, the more I think of it, the more it seems that that's just what it *is* meant for," said Wolf, with sudden opposition. "I would bet on it, if it's permissible in such a connection! She's exactly the person to succeed in novel-writing — which I suppose is what she's been attempting. Her own story contains a good deal of the romantic; she has had considerable experience in her life, especially in the last of it: and she shows plenty of imagination and *esprit* in her ordinary talk. Her story wouldn't be stupid, certainly."

"I don't know that that follows," said Baldwyn, thoughtfully spearing an olive. "Brightest talkers are not always brightest writers. I've known many a star of *conversaziones* that

couldn't have written a story to save his life. And the most brilliant writers I ever met were people who made no show whatever in society, lived within themselves, and somehow got perceptions and comprehensions of the world, its *Leben und Treiben*, beyond any thing that was achieved by the showy fellows, right in the midst of the carnival. I think sometimes that when these bright wits are handed about so freely for every-day refreshment, there must be too great a drain upon the reservoir to admit of their use in any more substantial form. The quiet ones who hoard up their resources have something solid to offer us, when they get ready for it."

"Is that a very new idea?" asked Wolf quizzingly. "Still, I don't see how it all proves that Charl — that madame Lucas is not capable of making a readable story."

"It doesn't. But there are other considerations. We know, for instance, that the character of our writings — of our first ones at least — will be determined by our intellectual company. And I know what hers has been. She has grown up in a storehouse of moth-eaten romance, as

much out of date now in France as the Burney books in England. They were excellent books in their time — and they are still; but this spice-demanding age will only guy them. We have left the D'Arblay far behind. My Lord Periwig and my Lady Lightfoot, dancing of minuets and falling among highwaymen, will hardly be tolerated on our book-shelves now. But madame Lucas's literary taste was shaped after such models; and I'll tell you what I fancy has resulted — a nice, tame, amiable, perhaps stilted little fiction, fairly constructed, quite blameless in syntax, also in morals — in fact, rather cramped, out of deference to a fancied rigor of cis-Atlantic taste; an ingenuous little book, with a touch of lady-like philosophy in it; very neat and smoothly worded — which won't sell!"

"M-m!" said Wolf. "I'm sure such a work as you describe would be quite an improvement on much of the stuff that we get nowadays."

"That's true; but what if nobody would read it? She *might*, with strong incentives, accomplish something — say, if she were obliged to persevere through necessity: but it was only a little spasm of ambition that spurred

her on so far; and if this fails, she will never try again. Or if she had some malicious motive, such as paying off an old score through the medium of the book — I knew a woman once who turned authoress — not such a bad one either — simply with the design of making a concealed thrust at somebody to whom she owed a grudge, who couldn't be got at in any other way!"

"Instead of tamely wishing that her enemy would write a book, she sat down and wrote a book to fire at her enemy," remarked Wolf, laughing. "So if a man wants to do anybody an ill turn, he ought to be uncommonly careful that his victim hasn't literary ability to turn again and rend him with. But it strikes me this isn't a very rational way to criticise a book — without having read a word of it! Why don't we set to work and find out what it's like, before exterminating it completely?"

"Why, to tell the truth, I rather dread to take hold of it," Baldwyn said: "I'm afraid of seeing my prognostic confirmed! But we might as well make a dash at it. First, though, I would advise that you look to your other visitor,

and hitch his chain a little tighter next time, or your bric-à-brac will be somewhat worse for his neighborhood."

Mr. Blondin, finding himself forgotten during the gentlemen's dialogue, had managed to disentangle his chain and ascend lightly to the mantle, where many interesting objects were assembled. He wound his way among these ornaments to a pretty Persian fan of feathers, which he shortly dissected with great pleasure; and afterwards pouncing upon a bottle of toilet-water, was engaged in swallowing its contents, when Baldwyn looked up and saw him.

"You confounded brute!" shouted Wolf, suddenly losing his regard for the type. The Man and Brother, inspired by fear, took a flying leap worthy of his namesake, and lighted in confusion upon a writing-desk, where his chain caught and held him captive; and Wolf promptly hustled him away to his owner's room.

"He's best in the Caribbees," said Baldwyn, chuckling, as the Darwinian returned somewhat heated in temper. "It's a pity about the fan."

"Yes: I wouldn't have had it damaged for a good sum. I got that fan at a *bal masqué* in

Vienna, long ago — quite a romantic mystery about it. I never knew who gave it to me: she disappeared without having revealed herself. She was got up in Greek style, and had long hair hanging half-way to the ground — beautiful hair, the color of Mrs. Lake's."

"Wig," observed Baldwyn briefly. "I thought you had given up all such nonsense."

"Oh! I didn't really care for the fan, you know, except as an ornament. It was a pretty ornament," said Wolf, brushing up the scattered feathers.

"As for the manuscript," Baldwyn said, putting it on the table, "I think I will leave it for you to examine; and to-morrow I will take my turn: and, after Justus has read it, we will meet and compare notes."

A more lenient trio of reviewers than those three gentlemen could not have been chosen for Charlotte's little production. Each one of them would have been glad in his own way to find it a success; while his sincerity, at the same time, would not allow any biasing of judgment.

The instant they saw each others' faces, being met for consultation in Wolf's apartment, they knew what the decision was to be.

"Well, Schouler," said Baldwyn, taking a judicial attitude on the hearth-rug with his hands joined behind him, "was I right, or not?"

"Thou hast always the wisdom of the serpent, more or less, my Critias!" said Wolf, pacing the floor, and speaking from his usual cloud, like a heathen divinity. "I am compelled to admit that the guess was tolerably correct. I'm afraid it's a lamentable truth that our little work is doomed! There are good points about it, as you said; but also much else that you prophesied is fulfilled. Ask Justus."

That gentleman sat ponderous and immovable of face, a Memnon on his pedestal, fluttering the leaves of the unlucky little manuscript.

"She might try again," he pronounced briefly.

"She won't," returned Baldwyn, still more briefly.

"'Thus we authors mount to such heights,'" murmured Wolf, reverting to his oracle Jean Paul: "'hence even the worst of us, *if we hold out*, become somewhat at last.'"

"Why, yes! there is promise here, I think," observed Memnon, tapping on the MS.; "but it has gone awry — it wants re-con-structing: as it stands, it simply won't do."

"We all seem to have reached that conclusion somehow," said Wolf. "Astonishing how well we agree! It's the first time we ever did, to such an extent — which is very unlucky for the book. But after all, there's consolation in the thought that if she gives it up she avoids the publicity of a literary career, which is all the better for her. I don't like to have a lady emerge from her retired sphere and come into contact with the spines of the 'universal hedgehog,' unless it becomes really necessary for her to do so."

"Universal fiddlesticks!" said Baldwyn captiously, disdaining to argue that point. "You don't seem to consider the disappointment to her. I've no doubt she has set her heart on succeeding; and this is what I have been afraid of all the time! And now she will have to be told of the failure."

"She won't mind," said Mr. O'Brien, sagely nodding his Olympian head. "Don't worry!"

"No," added Wolf: "she's very elastic, you know, as well as very sensible. You're deceived if you expect her to afflict herself particularly about it."

"Well," Baldwyn said, "anyhow we shall go up there directly, according to agreement. And who's to tell her?"

"You, of course," said the other critics, with promptitude.

"I don't see why I should take all the unpleasantness of it. Wolf could do it much better: he's a smooth-tongued fellow. It isn't any easier for me to say disagreeable things to a lady than it is for other people."

This important question remained unsettled till the gentlemen came in sight of Maison-de-Presles, when Wolf, yielding to argument, began hastily to rehearse his speech, much disturbed by suggestions from his friends.

"Do it in French: that will make it easier," advised Baldwyn.

"No, don't!" urged Justus, "because I want to hear how you put it."

"Call up your diplomatic skill," said Baldwyn, as they stood waiting in the music-room.

"Invest the judgment with such rhetorical sweetness as to sugar-coat the bitter substratum, and" —

"Heavens! if you'll let me alone," exclaimed Wolf, "I shall get it out somehow; but all this suggesting will drive the last idea from my head!"

And while he was trying to "call up his diplomatic skill," a rustle approached, the portière slid back, and a bronze-brown head appeared. Madame Lucas stood looking at them, a captivating thing, in a wonderful dark and glistering dress, brightened in places by mysterious glimpses of scarlet.

"Well, gentlemen?" she said, with an interrogative air. It appeared that she did not want any preliminaries.

Baldwyn moved away, looking very nervous, driving his hands into his pockets.

"Madame," began Wolf, stammering for the first time in his recollection — "madame, we — we appreciate the confidence you have shown in our judgment, and the — the honor of having the manuscript in our charge" —

Charlotte threw a quick glance at the other

two, and burst into such a peal of laughter that she was quite speechless for a minute.

"*Assez* — I know all about it!" she cried directly, taking breath. "You need not, any of you, say another word! I knew it some time ago! I mistook my vocation — eh, Mr. Baldwyn? I was meant to — serve luncheons to literary ogres, when they are exhausted with butchering poor little 'first efforts'!" — and she touched a bell-handle. "Rosa, bring in the *brioche* and some coffee!"

CHAPTER XIV.

MISCHIEF.

Farewell! thou canst not teach me to forget!

— Romeo and Juliet.

Je ne sais comment je vais je ne sais où!

— De Musset.

THE subject of composition was committed to silence after this experiment, and Charlotte's lively faculties turned into other channels.

She was at no loss for occupation. She went on with her singing more diligently than ever, and in that connection took a fancy to increase her slight knowledge of Italian. She had been pleased to discover Mr. Schouler's proficiency in the language; so that presently he fell into a habit of bringing copies of Tasso, Ariosto, Petrarca, and other poets, from which they improved themselves by occasional readings.

Baldwyn wondered how long Wolf intended

to stay in St. Leon. He watched him like a ferret, but could find nothing in the young man's conduct to provoke the sermonizing he was longing to give him, unless it might be the frequency of the Italian lessons. More than once the older man had framed his homily and was on the point of uttering it, when he found it suddenly checked and his intention paralyzed by the other's easy, matter-of-fact manner. Wolf was certainly enjoying himself very well — it seemed too well under the circumstances; and either he was unconscious of it, or he was obstinately shutting his eyes to his own unwisdom — Baldwyn could not divine which. It was positive that he meant no ill in the world. He had drifted into a pleasant port — after the fashion of yachts in holiday-time: the scenery and temperature were agreeable, and he was in no hurry to set sail again. His admirably light, off-hand manner of meeting men, things, and circumstances was an excellent mask for any changes of spirit not desirable to be betrayed. If Baldwyn had known him less intimately he might have been altogether reassured in observing him; as it was, he had disquieting glimpses

now and then of something unusual — something feverish and unsettled beneath all this nonchalant surface.

One night, finding Wolf stretched in his lounging-chair before the fireplace, serenely turning over some collections of Italian songs, he thought the occasion favorable for a cautious word or two on the subject of his anxiety.

"If I did not know of certain circumstances, my boy," said he, adopting a tone of half-sober raillery, and pushing at a bit of anthracite between the bars with the tip of his boot, "I might fancy that you were pretty seriously impressed by our fair friend at Maison-de-Presles."

"How so?" said Wolf, in the same tone. "Because I'm there so often?"

"To be sure."

"Then, I am to understand that *you* are 'seriously impressed' by our fair friend, am I? You go there as often as I do, you know," said Wolf negligently, lying back, and looking square at the other with a perfectly undisturbed face.

Baldwyn flushed up, and omitted the rest of his lecture. Wolf was not an easy fellow to handle.

And as to madame Lucas, the difficulty was still greater. The fact of her being to all appearance gay and natural proved nothing: Baldwyn knew very well that she was clever and proud enough to keep up that appearance in any case; so that he had no chance of finding out whether her peace was threatened or not: and there was the impossibility of giving her any warning.

So they all went on as usual with their various pursuits and amusements. Charlotte drove out a great deal, taking one and another of her friends with her, and madame de Presles in a brown-cushioned corner of the little carriage, a mute and sallow image of Propriety. Charlotte brought home flowers and sweetmeats; she 'entertained' as happily as ever; she learned a quantity of new music — including some *lieder*, which she worked over perseveringly to conquer the pronunciation. Every few days Mr. Schouler might be seen coming through the paved courtyard with a brisk step and a bright upward glance at the windows; then he and Charlotte would settle themselves in the music-room over their books, for a delightful canto or

two — they were on the "Divina Commedia" now, and deeply absorbed in it. Joseph looked in at them now and then, unobserved. Joseph was in his old place again, at Maison-de-Presles, quite recovered, but considerably thinned by the few weeks' illness and disturbance of mind.

Baldwyn would have been terror-stricken if he had known how necessary these diversions had become to the demure Charlotte, and how steadily her belief grew that it was to be a permanent condition of things, and Wolf to be always reading cantos, or singing, or doing whatever else she should choose to appoint for him! That was how she had come to feel, unconsciously. He was furnishing an element in her life which she was now unable to dissociate from it in her mind: she could not imagine herself going on without it. It was a part of her belief that Wolf had a similar understanding, although she did sometimes wonder a little that he had let slip so many chances of giving it definite expression. In fact, however, Wolf had no idea that he had grown so in importance with the lady of Maison-de-Presles. He knew that his visits gave her pleasure; but, to

do him justice — and to the credit of her clever dissembling — he never suspected how much.

Not so the keen-scented Joseph. He was busy every hour of the day in putting this and that and a great many other things together, and in keeping his control over the wrath, malice, and jealousy that were accumulating in his hot spirit. Occasionally Baldwyn was mystified by meeting the Frenchman's two black eyes, fixed for an instant on his own with an odd sort of smile, as though there were some secret intelligence between them.

"Which most assuredly there isn't!" said the perplexed recipient of these glances to himself. "I wish the fellow would go on the stage, where his grimaces would serve some purpose besides making me nervous!"

Joseph happened to be standing in the vestibule one day, looking through the side-light, as Charlotte's carriage drew up, with her pretty face visible therein beside madame de Presles' yellow one. Mr. Schouler's brown beard projected itself immediately from the front seat as that gentleman opened the carriage-door, and

jumped out to assist madame Lucas; but he jumped in again afterwards, instead of coming to the house as usual, and drove off with madame de Presles. Charlotte opened the gate and ran in over the pavement, humming to herself and gathering up her silken skirt. They had been visiting some art-galleries, where madame de Presles had kindly felt fatigued, and preferred to rest in a chair while the others wandered about among the pictures.

"Where is madame de Presles gone?" asked Joseph, as he opened the house-door for the young lady.

"She thought of some commission to attend to as we were on the way home, and has gone back," Charlotte said, springing over the steps. "The carriage will leave Mr. Schouler at his hotel, but he promised to help madame de Presles with her errands first."

Instead of going away in a fit of sulks, as he usually did on such occasions, Joseph followed her into the music-room, and leaned against the window watching her as she sat drawing off her gloves. He was curiously pale, she noticed — quite ghostly looking; and his eyes glittered.

"Well," said he presently, "have you had a pleasant morning of it?"

"Very pleasant indeed, thank you. This fine frosty air is magnificent!"

A long silence followed, Charlotte abstractedly straightening the gloves with a preoccupied smile. Joseph resumed presently, in a peculiar off-hand manner —

"What do you think I have been doing all the while you have been out enjoying this fine frosty air, *hein?* You would not interest yourself to guess, so I will tell you. I have been trying to decide whether it would be better to dispose of myself by shooting, as they do here, or by charcoal, as they do at home. Which would madame recommend?"

Charlotte would have laughed at this; but the aspect of his face was not amusing, and she looked at him in some alarm.

"Many people prefer drowning," he continued, with a frightful air of pleasantry. "I had thought of trying the river out here; but I have an antipathy to American rivers, and the Seine is too far off for my convenience."

"What ails you, Joseph? you don't look at

all well," Charlotte said coaxingly, really afraid that his brain was unsettled. At the same time, startled as she was, she could not help being reminded by his inflections of a certain emotional actor of the French school, who was Joseph's highest ideal. Poor Joseph never escaped being melodramatic, even in his most serious moments.

"You think I don't look well? Is it possible! But I am not a well-favored individual at any time, in your opinion — not so well-favored as your Mr. Wolf, *hein?*"

"Joseph," said Charlotte, with severe dignity, "I don't understand your reference to Mr. Schouler — not at all! What interest have you in his appearance? and why should you compare it with yours? They are not the least alike, I assure you."

"Ah! aha! I believe it!" Joseph cried, gathering ferocity as he proceeded. "And what interest have I in it? Why, who should know that better than you, madame Lucas? What is the use of your pretending not to understand me? You have understood me all along, from the very days when you used to walk to mass

with your mother, and I hung out of the window in the rue Qui-sait to look after you, like a little fool of a boy! What interest have I in the face of that big, whiskered fellow? Just as much as you have! When your interest in it ceases, mine will cease. When I thought you were *engouée* of the other one — your monsieur Baldwyn — I was 'interested' in him too; and you knew it. But when it proves to be this one — aha! you know well enough how much I love him! *Coquette, va!*"

Joseph's face, as he ground out the last words, would certainly have got him a first rank at the Conservatoire competitions. Charlotte was pale with vexation, but sat still, opposing her dignity to this tirade.

"I am very angry and very much shocked," she said coldly. "You have presumed on my friendliness, Joseph: I should never have expected such liberty of speech from you, and I can never pardon it."

"I do not ask you to pardon it: I am taking my revenge with a few plain statements, that is all. How sweet it is to take one's revenge — ha, madame Lucas?"

"I cannot perceive in what manner you are doing it. You have merely succeeded in exciting my extreme contempt, and have sunk yourself entirely below my most ordinary regard — if that gives you any satisfaction."

"Ah! but I have not said all that I can say!" cried Joseph, infuriated to the last degree by her manner. "I can tell you a piece of news about your admired Mr. Wolf that will spoil your composure, my faith! Shall I tell it, *hein?*"

"I should forbid you to repeat that gentleman's name if I did not know that nothing you may choose to invent can harm it."

She was trying to appear cool and indifferent; but she shivered with excitement, and Joseph saw it.

"Forbid my repeating his name!" — with an ironical hunch of the shoulders. "Ah! and what should prevent my repeating it, if I chose? Listen, coquette! hear how you have been outdone at your own game! Your Mr. Wolf too has been playing at coquetry — he is *married* — ha, ha!"

Charlotte turned upon him a look from which

every expression was driven but amazement. If he had expected her to start, exclaim, ask agitated questions, fall unconscious, he was disappointed: she simply sat as before, but looking at him with that curious wondering stare, as divided between scorn and pity. That did not suit him at all: he tried a bit of subterfuge.

"Madame Lucas," he said, with a sudden change of tone, "you may think what you please of me, and of what I say; but I assure you that this information is true. I learned it from a source which will not admit of doubt; and Mr. Baldwyn knows it as well as I do. As to my *inventing* — you said that in excitement: you have known me too long to believe that I should resort to falsehoods in any case. — There is nothing further that I wish to say now. You shall be relieved of my presence immediately — and finally."

He turned with his most ceremonious bow, and left the room, feeling that his weapon had at last done some service, in spite of the victim's provoking self-command.

He had not miscalculated his stroke. Char-

lotte sat, after his departure, quite quiet. She was a little bewildered by this sudden outbreak, and by her own intense effort to seem undisturbed. She began slowly to review Joseph's violent speeches — "*your Mr. Wolf has been playing at coquetry*" — "*this information is true: Mr. Baldwyn knows it as well as I do.*" Mr. Baldwyn knew what? — that Wolf was married? Oh, no! that was not possible! Joseph had been making up the story to startle her, because he was jealous — yet she had never known him to tell a falsehood. One cannot tell, though, what a jealous man may be induced to do. She would send for Mr. Baldwyn, and ask him about it. Yes, and then he would know her secret, and would divert himself over it afterwards, perhaps. That would be dreadful: she must not say any thing to Mr. Baldwyn now, surely. To ask Wolf himself — every fibre of her would have refused to do that, even if it had been a permissible thing — which it certainly was not under the circumstances.

She began to see the meaning of those words — "Wolf married:" that meant — Wolf

going away — at some one else's disposal — no more reading and singing; no more of those charming, listless hours of not certainly more than thirty minutes' length, time was so bewitched by those two deep, drowsy, gray eyes; — worst of all, Wolf playing a part, staying deliberately about her to amuse his heedless fancy, taking no pains to consider what the effect might be on her. But that could not be true! Was it not a contemptible thing to credit the first suspicions that were cast upon his goodness?

She started up and began to walk back and forth, nervously moving her hands together. The house was always very still: she could hear the kitten crying in the cold garden, and Eudoxie calling to some of the servants in an upper room, and the shrill voices answering her. Joseph had gone out, she thought: the house-door had shut directly after his impressive exit from the music-room.

There was no getting rid of that ugly possibility. If it were true, why had they made a secret of it? why should not Mr. Baldwyn have told her? It must be an absurd fabrication of Joseph's.

But one by one the little doubts and wonders that had sometimes visited her, and been dismissed, came flying back. She remembered how often she had been puzzled at some odd change in Wolf's manner; she recalled the September afternoon on the hillside, when they looked over the purple vineyards and saw the sun hide his gorgeous face — what a strange humor Wolf was in! not indifference — oh, no! there was something very unlike that in his eyes. And afterwards she had lain awake in her little cottage chamber, and thought musingly, with a sort of reproachful gentleness, why had he not spoken then? why did he pass over in silence that moment which held so much of significance and might have held so much of promise? Was this the explanation of it?

"Oh, yes, it is true! I know now it is true!" she exclaimed aloud, a cold conviction all at once rushing over her. "If I did not have to blame him," she said slowly to herself, "it would be easier. He might have known — he might have taken a little thought for me!"

Carriage-wheels grated against the curbstone

in front of the gate: it was madame de Presles coming back.

Charlotte slipped into the hall and up stairs to shut herself in her own room. "I cannot see anybody now," she thought, turning the key, and throwing herself into a chair before her little fireplace, where there was nothing but cold ashes. The room was quite chilly in spite of its rosy splendors. Charlotte looked about with spiritless eyes: something on the pink-frilled mantle arrested them presently, and woke a quick spark under the heavy lashes. It was a small porcelain frame prettily moulded into flowers — little curling sprays of blue myosotis with its leaves; and there was a photograph within the wreath — a rather poor likeness of Wolf Schouler. He had given it to her by way of a jest one day: she remembered with faint satisfaction that none of her own was in his possession. The frame she had come across in a jeweller's show-case, among French knick-knacks; and she bought it with some uncertain reference to Wolf's fancy for that romantic little flower.

She stood up impetuously, took it down, and,

sliding out the card with hurried fingers, pushed it far in between the grate-bars: probably she did not notice that the fire was gone out. This sacrifice performed, she was putting back the empty frame; but it slipped from her unsteady hands, and came down crashing upon the fender. The poor little *vergissmeinnicht* garland lay at her feet a wreck of blue and green fragments. She pushed them all impatiently under the grate and turned away. It seemed a pity that other less tangible souvenirs could not be as easily disposed of. But they were growing intolerable.

"If I could only get away somewhere!" Charlotte murmured, pushing up her hair with cold hands. "How *can* I go and talk to them down stairs, and sit at the table with them! and Joseph there too! and he will be exulting to himself, and they will wonder — no, I cannot do that yet."

And with this thought a violent impulse, such as she used to feel sometimes in childhood, seized her — to throw off all responsibility, and run away somewhere out of their way, just for a while —

The idea acted upon her like an external force. Within a half-hour she was fastening the last of her wraps and tying a thick veil over her hat before the rose-draped *toilette.* She had not stopped to consider her own movements any more than the five-year-old adventurer who escapes his nurse and starts off surreptitiously, obedient to impulse. Also in the same unreasoning way she had hastily pressed some articles into a little hand-bag, and locked it; and then just stopped to scribble a word for Eudoxie — that she had a headache, and was going out a short distance to drive it off. She called a maid and gave her the note; and immediately slipped out of her room and the house without meeting any one.

"Now," said she, when two or three corners had been turned, "let me think where I will go. If I could get out into the country — some quiet place where I never had been before, and there were kind strange people — Where can I find such a place? Who could tell me about it?"

Mrs. Lake would know, but Charlotte would not go to her: she wanted no explanations, nor

even that any one should know of her going away. All at once the mental image of a broad, honest face presented itself, smiling out of a pair of friendly blue eyes. She remembered that Justus O'Brien moved in a somewhat erratic orbit, and was much given, especially in fine weather, to describing tangents into the country, with a view to change of atmosphere.

"He will be sure to know — and I can trust him," she said to herself, going on still faster. Some cabs were waiting about at a neighboring street-corner; she beckoned one, and got in quickly, feeling it very fortunate that she happened to remember Mr. O'Brien's address in the city. Still more fortunate, she found him there: it was on one of the bustling streets of the business section. She sent away the cab as soon as she saw his wonderstruck face coming out of the doorway, and hurried to him with such an excited air that the honest fellow was quite startled, and thought of some dreadful catastrophe.

"Come in here," he said, leading the way to a dusty little office behind a stairway: "what is it? There's nobody here. Has any thing happened? What can I do?"

It was some time before he could make out Charlotte's errand, from her quick, nervous speech at first. When he did begin to understand what she wanted of him, he was greatly astonished and perplexed, but kindly tried not to show it, and asked no questions.

"I think I know the kind of place you want," he said, rubbing his chin thoughtfully, "and I can direct you to just that one. It's at Westervale, an hour or two out from the city; nice little farmhouse, with one of the best women in it that you ever saw. She will make you confortable for a night or a fortnight, as you choose; and you will be sure to like the place. How soon do you wish to go?"

"Oh, now — at once! Could I go on the next train?"

"Bless me!" said Justus, forgetting himself. "What can you — a — a — that is, haven't you any luggage that you want sent along?"

"I did not want any thing but these," Charlotte said, showing the small bag and a shawl or two on her arm. "And I thought perhaps there would be a train going directly. But how shall I get word to the people at that place? will not that be necessary?"

"Why, let me see — there's a train," said Justus, consulting his watch, "leaves inside of an hour. I will telegraph at once to the Westervale station, and Mrs. Glen — I'll write the name on a card — will be notified in season. You will have quite a while to wait yet, though: the depot is not very far off. Is your carriage standing outside?"

"I sent it away," said Charlotte, almost ready to laugh at her own bewildered blunders. "Never mind! No, you shall not go after another. I know the way to the station, and I would rather walk: it will use up the time. And, Mr. O'Brien, remember — you are the only person who knows where I go — I did not wish to ask advice of any one else."

Justus was immensely proud and pleased at this consideration, though more puzzled than ever.

"Why didn't she ask Mrs. Lake or John Baldwyn?" he wondered secretly. "Can any thing be wrong with either of them?"

"None of them at home know about it, and I don't wish them to just now. I only ask you this favor — not to tell *any one* where I have gone, nor to let them think you know."

"Not if I were to be led to the stake the next minute!" said Mr. O'Brien firmly. "You're not going alone to the depot: let me go with you, and carry those shawls!"

"No," said Charlotte, "please not! I would rather go alone, indeed; and I am afraid of being recognized. I will go along very fast; and, if I meet any one that knows me, perhaps my veil will be mask enough. You are so good — I am very thankful! Good-by — *soyez heureux!*" and she had shaken his hand and gone like a spirit through the dingy passage, and was lost among the crowding figures on the street. Justus followed to the doorway, pondering.

"I never heard of any thing like that before!" said he presently; and then he went with his usual meteoric rush to the telegraph-office.

Charlotte hurried on her way, feeling a momentary relief in the interest of having a fixed destination. Turning down a cross-street, where the crowd was thinned to a few passers, she came behind a trio of children, trotting steadily along as though rather concerned at the increasing darkness, it being a season of

early twilights. The largest of the three had a familiar air: as she came up with them she saw that it was Davey Lake, and remembered that his mother's studio was not far distant. He caught sight of her at the same moment, and flew at her with a great clamor, notwithstanding the veil.

"Why, my Davey," she said, hushing him, "how do you come to be out so late alone? where are you going?"

"Oh, Tom and me," explained Davey inelegantly, "are going home with Margie" — indicating a flaxy-haired midget some degrees less in size. "We're going to supper at her house: it's right near by. Mamma wasn't afraid. Don't you want to go with us? It's at that hotel in the next block."

"Yes, I will go with you," Charlotte said, taking his hand and setting off, the children capering around her: she was glad of a moment's companionship with the little things. She put up her veil when they came to the side-door of the hotel, and stooped down to kiss Davey.

"What's the matter, mamma Charlotte?" in-

quired the boy curiously, putting his hand up to her cheek. "Are you crying?"

"I'm hungry, Davey," she said, brushing her eyes and pretending to laugh. "Isn't that something to cry about?"

Master Davey laughed too, uproariously: he was so used to mamma Charlotte's funny ways. She put her arms around his little brown head, and gave it a tender hug.

"Good-by, *mignon*," she said, taking a long look into the big twinkling eyes. "Don't tell mamma that you saw me to-night. Good-by, my darling!"

And she pulled down her veil and ran away, feeling more desolate than ever.

CHAPTER XV.

A RUNAWAY.

"Tu crois en Dieu, toi?" "Oh! oui, par exemple! Ceux qui ont beaucoup souffert, ne peuvent pas faire autrement."

— GEORGE SAND.

THE tension of nervous excitement under which Charlotte was acting did not relax for a long time. As she pulled her wrappings closely around her and shrank into the corner of her seat, it seemed as if the train would never move; and having moved, that it could never fly fast enough to satisfy the breathless hurry that possessed her. She seemed to be making her escape from something — uncertain what: she drew down still lower the veil that covered her head, lest some one who knew her might be in the car, and come to speak to her.

But by little and little, as the train shot on through the gathering dusk, a cool current of air blowing in at the window on which she

leaned, the fever of haste died out, and left in its place a dull, forlorn half-consciousness, such as one may feel in a miserable dream. She sat with her face against the cold glass, seeing the flying lights wink uncertainly from heights and depths of dim landscape, hearing the dismal echoing cry of the whistle, feeling the wind touch her cheek with a welcome but smoky chill; and all the time, swifter than the flight of the wheels, there swept confusedly through her memory scenes, words, looks, songs — a medley of bygone impressions that already in these strange hours began to slip far and farther away from her.

With all Charlotte's energy and spirit, there was a childlike element in her that asserted itself when a crisis had been passed: it made itself felt, now that she was forced to sit inactive for a time, in a sudden longing for companionship and protection. For the first time since her chosen exile she felt how really alone she had been during these illusive years of happiness — actually with no one to lean upon. Eudoxie, not much better than a child; madame de Presles, tender and kind, also innocent

and incapable. There was none of her friends, devoted as they all might be, to whom she would have confessed her loneliness — a singular, obstinate little pride of hers would have forbidden that; and indeed there were not any of them near enough to her heart to satisfy its impatient want — except one, who was not only out of her reach forever, but had, it seemed, betrayed a trifling and deceptive nature not worthy even of her indulgent thought.

She called up in melancholy fancy the image of a pretty, airy woman, holding her little court of flattering friends; and then of a sad fugitive hurrying with veiled face from the pleasant scenes, alone but for the company of thoughts too persistent to be escaped. Poor little butterfly-woman! it was a grievous contrast.

By degrees, as these visions wavered across the dreary bewilderment of her mind, a still greater weakness took hold upon her; and under cover of her veil she sank into a long and heavy weeping, such as she could not remember since her childish days. Many and changing thoughts came to her in the dizzy quiet that follows after tears, during the hour

or two of her brief journey. She had fallen into quite another mood by the time the train made halt at the station whose name she was trying to keep in mind. Every thing was become oddly confused and vague: she hardly realized her own movements, or how it came about that she had left the car at the right time, and in possession of her bag and wraps. She was sensible of a little dim platform with oil-lamps; of a covered wagon drawn up at its edge, toward which she moved mechanically; of being helped in by some one who said he had been waiting for her, and who put in extra rugs to keep off the night-air before climbing to the driver's seat in front; of a long rumbling transit over fields wrapped in darkness but for the faint light of the wagon-lamps and the fainter light of the half-seen constellations overhead; and at length of a bustling stop before a gate, where there were candles moving, and the glow of fires indoors, and a pleasant woman's voice coming out and speaking to the driver. And then she was on her feet again, going up a little path with the sudden lights dazzling her eyes; and the pleasant voice was saying something

hospitable while soft hands belonging to it closed over hers, and drew her in from the chilly air.

A wide room filled with firelight and leaping shadows, apparently at once a dining and living room; for there was a partly-spread table at one end of it, with preparations for tea-making: and a comfortable kettle was steaming away over the glow, hanging from an old-fashioned crane. The owner of the kind voice and hands, now revealed as she moved before the hearth, was seen to be a slim, active little woman of middle age, in housewifely dress, and with the slightest frost upon her dark hair. She was somewhat plain of feature, but had a beautiful kindly eye and expressive face.

"I have forgotten your name," said Charlotte, confusedly looking at her, and trying to unwind the veil from her own head. "It was told to me — it is on a card somewhere. But I can't remember — you will excuse me" —

"My name is Mrs. Glen," said the other, hastening to help her with the veil and the heavy wrappings. "You look very tired — sit here, by the fireplace" — pulling up a soft

chintz-cushioned rocker. "It is a rough ride from the station; and you are not used to rough travelling, I think."

"I should not have minded the ride, but I was already tired, and troubled," Charlotte said, dropping wearily into the seat, and keeping her eyes fixed on this new friendly face. She had felt an instant confidence in it, at the moment when it first smiled on her, and she felt the touch of the welcoming hands. As for the little hostess, it was plain that she found a wonderful novelty in such an arrival, so delicately attired, and looking at her with such a steady pitiful gaze, from two great, bright, sorrowful eyes. Charlotte, in her hasty departure, had not given a moment's thought to her dress; but it happened to be sufficiently suitable for a short journey — some silky dark-brown fabric, which she had further modified by a great scarf of dark lace rolled around her neck. Yet the simplicity of the dress did not prevent it from looking — on Charlotte — as dainty and foreign by this farmhouse fireside as one of her Indian azaleas might have looked, set into a bed of homely southernwood and mignonette. Instead

of being dulled by their long overflow, her eyes seemed to be enlarged and to shine brighter than ever: her ruffled hair, and the flush of scarcely-dried tears on her face, added to its childlike expression.

Little Mrs. Glen watched her with a mixture of admiring interest and compassion, just such as one bestows on a pretty, lost child — and it was this effect that her guest produced on her, insomuch that she presently drew nearer, and, under pretence of rearranging the loosened hair, softly stroked it with a light, lingering touch. And Charlotte, with an instant movement of gratitude, sat up and caught the gentle hands in her own, drawing them down against her cheek.

"You are very good," said she, her voice fluttering slightly. "Why do you feel sorry for me? Do I look so piteous? He could not have had time to tell you any thing about me?"

"No: I know nothing about you but what I see in your eyes," said the little woman softly. "They tell a story — but you must forgive me if I read it too quickly. I take a great liberty in speaking so to you — an entire stranger — I am very thoughtless" —

"It does not seem to me that you are a stranger," said Charlotte, drawing a deep breath, as one does in an interval of comfort between recurrences of pain. "I feel as though you knew all about me, but I must remember that you do not. Sit down for a moment, and let me tell you whom you receive so kindly. My name is madame Lucas. I have lived in St. Leon for several years, and I have good friends there. But a trouble came to me suddenly, just now — only this morning — something that nobody could help me in; and it quite unbalanced me. I ran away from them all without stopping to think — it was very childish; but I wanted to collect myself, and not to see anybody's face that I knew, for a little while. I shall have to go back very soon. I ran to Mr. O'Brien to ask him where I should go: he was the only person I could think of consulting then. He did not know what had happened: but he saw that I was determined to go away somewhere; and he was very kind, and helped me as much as he could. Oh, he is such a very kind man!"

"Yes," murmured the little woman emphatically, "that he is! I know him."

"He promised not to tell. I think I was a little outside myself," said Charlotte, her disturbance of mind affecting her usually correct language. "I would not let any of them at home know that I was going: it seemed that I could not endure a word of questioning. And it did not occur to me that they might be frightened. Perhaps they will. I did not think about them at all — only about myself, and how to get away for just a little while, alone. But it will not be long before I shall go back to them, and I shall be quieter then. I shall be quite cool and self-possessed by that time."

"And in order to get quiet," Mrs. Glen said, in her prompt comfortable speech, "you must rest: and you must take this tea immediately, and not talk any longer; though I should be glad enough to hear you. This is just the place to rest in."

Charlotte drank the tea when it was poured out for her, keeping submissively silent; and looked on from the chintz rocker at the arrangement of a little supper, which however she was not able to taste. Afterwards her motherly hostess took her away to a "guest-

room" overhead, where by mild candlelight she could just see its simple old-fashioned furnishing and white-curtained windows, and where the fresh smell of some sweet herb crept out subtly from hangings and presses, as pleasant as the iris-scented air of her own room in St. Leon. Being left by herself here she felt a sense of welcome loneliness — welcome but immeasurably sad.

"Now at least I shall have a little while to think — to decide what I will do," she said, dropping down by the window, and opening it for a draught of the cold air's strong cordial.

It was a very dark night: even the faint stars that looked on her arrival were now hidden, so that she could not distinguish any surroundings. But there were trees about: the night-wind was heaving deep sighs of unrest through their invisible branches. Charlotte leaned out and listened; silence was below and around, while in the distance a train shot along its track, heralded by the long mournful bay of the steam-whistle. She had never noticed before what unearthly desolation there is in that whistle; nor did she ever hear one afterwards,

especially in the silence of night, without feeling again the wind upon her face, and the dense darkness, and the numbness at heart.

Her rosary was hanging around her neck, where she had hastily thrown it on leaving her room at home. She always kept it, *en bonne Catholique*, suspended from one of the sconces over her dressing-table, that it might be at hand for nightly prayers: it must be confessed however that when she took it down, there was a light powdering of dust upon its delicate beads of black and amber. She drew it out now, and slipped it through her fingers.

"Ah! I have been remiss," she said to herself accusingly: "I have been very wicked! How my poor *chapelet* has been neglected! Why should I pray to be spared from unhappiness? I do not deserve to be happy."

And then, in some unaccountable way, a fragment of an old reading entered her mind — it was on some page of Jean Paul: "'But,' said Albano, 'how, then, does God love us?' — 'As a father loves his child: not because it is the best child, but because it needs him.'"

"Because it needs him," she repeated, sink-

ing her forehead upon the damp sill. "*O miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam!*" The words had a meaning now that she had not felt when she read them by the rosy light of her wedding morning, at the old house in the rue Qui-sait.

Mrs. Glen found herself wondering, as she woke at gray daybreak, whether that wistful sweet-voiced visitor was an actual substance, under the same roof with herself, or whether it was merely a vision of the night, which would not stand the test of morning. But when she went down into the room where the chintz rocker still sat by the fireplace, there was a loop of brown ribbon fallen on the hearth-rug; and there hung a large furred wrap, heavily-scented, and much too substantial for any visionary form to carry. And very soon its owner appeared, her brown hair swept away from her forehead and moist with morning dew; her pale face quite composed, although there were bluish shades under its clear hazel eyes. Any one to whom the face was familiar would have found a sad change in its expres-

sion; though to Mrs. Glen's unaccustomed eye it merely looked a very sweet, tired, but serene face — sweet enough to be imagined with a circle of light about it, and arches of singing cherubs for a background, such as she had seen in books of engravings.

"I woke very early," said Charlotte, coming in with a soft, languid step, "though my sleep was undisturbed. I have been hanging out of the window for a half-hour, watching the light grow. See how damp my hair is! I like the feeling of it."

"I was just thinking that you were an illusion," Mrs. Glen answered cheerfully, "or that I dreamed it all — the telegram, and your coming in the wagon, and sitting here by the fire — it seemed like a kind of vision."

The vision was still there, at any rate, moving about, watching her with soft, curious looks, sitting with her at table, not eating much, but speaking in a subdued voice the prettily-turned speech of a fluent foreigner. Mrs. Glen had never seen any one like her before. She found her afterwards, on coming in from her busy watch of the household ma-

chinery, tilting dreamily in the rocker, her soft hands hanging limp over its arms, her brown eyes intent upon the frisking flame.

"Come and sit here a little while, please," she said, looking around earnestly. "Are you too busy? I would like to hear you talk." And, as Mrs. Glen came and sat beside her, she added, looking back at the fire with a little sigh, "This is so pleasant to me! how strange it is that I should find such a pleasant asylum! I wish I were to stay here a long time!"

"Why not?" exclaimed Mrs. Glen. "I'm sure I wish you were. Why not?"

"Because there are ones at home that will need me. I am just beginning to think of them a little. There is a good, kind companion of mine, who came away from France with me; and there is another, my old schoolmate, so timid and so homesick. Poor Eudoxie! Oh, they could not get on at all without me for long! But I think if I should stay with you a while it would do me good. You yourself look so good, so easy and cheerful! you seem as if sorrow had never come near, to touch you."

"Ah, dear!" said the little woman seriously, "that is a fortune that none of us need look for. There is a good deal of winter weather to be gotten through by every one of us. I have experienced some of it — you can see, it has left a touch of frost upon my head," said she, smoothing back her gray-sprinkled dark locks.

"It has not touched your face at all," said Charlotte, wondering at the summer-like brightness of the black eyes that had looked through the storms of surely fifty winters. "I cannot imagine you looking unhappy. What is the secret of it?"

"It's an open secret," answered Mrs. Glen, with her honest, contented smile. "It is — because I am happy! The storms have gone by, and have not hurt me; and my little share of the world seems very pleasant. I don't know why I should look unhappy."

"Ah, well!" sighed madame Lucas, locking her small hands pathetically, "you have some talisman, I think. I used to believe that there were a great many happy people on the earth — those who had money, and lived in high places; that was when I was a good deal

younger, and poorer. I said I should be happy enough if I were rich. And I *was* happy for a long time, until lately. Then, when I began to find that it was possible for me to be discontented, even with the riches, it suddenly seemed as though everybody else were doomed to the same fate, though I never realized it before. And I began to suspect that all the show of contentment and pleasure that people were making around me was pretence and emptiness. But I went on making my pretence, and avoiding every thing serious as much as possible, for fear of finding out some day that I was miserable. But *you* do not have to pretend: one can see that in your face. And yet — there is so little joy to be had from the world! and you look as if you had a store of it somewhere."

Mrs. Glen's eye had fallen on the black-and amber *chapelet* still hanging on Charlotte's neck. It was a strange device to her, not altogether pleasing. She had never before been brought into contact with a Romanist of the better class; and would perhaps have felt some indefinite alarm at the notion, having

grown up in the spirit of a most vigorously protesting sect. But this particular Romanist with the russet-brown head and soft, infantine looks was entirely disarming: the most rectangular of covenanters must have unbent to those innocent hazel glances. There, however, was the portentous string of beads, which was not to be justified even by its gentle resting-place.

"You — you are a Catholic?" said Mrs. Glen hesitantly, with her eyes still drawn toward it.

"Oh, yes!" Charlotte said, fingering the beads. "But such a bad one! so careless and forgetful, and so selfish all the time, while affairs went smoothly with me! I repent now: I shall do better."

Mrs. Glen sighed, a dubious little sigh. To her mind, forgetfulness in the matter of rosaries was rather creditable than otherwise. This was a mysterious religion, about which she was completely in the dark. The Zend-Avesta would have been as clear to her.

"Our beliefs are not alike," she said moderately. "I do not understand yours; perhaps I

have misjudged it. Perhaps there are points on which we can sympathize. You believe in God" —

"Yes, indeed!" said Charlotte simply, and looking somewhat shocked. "How could I help it? I was in trouble."

"Ah! you have learned that, then! Yes, we are like so many children: we run about our own concerns and amusements until something hurts or frightens us, and then we call out to be taken care of. We are all on the same footing there, whatever our creed may be."

"Do you believe," asked Charlotte, "that there are people who feel self-sufficient enough not to mind — to stand up against their fates, and not feel helpless and dependent? They say so, you know — some say so. I have heard people boast that they were strong enough all alone to face misfortune, and never become crushed nor softened; and really it seemed as if that might be true."

"Then," said Mrs. Glen promptly, "it must have been a very insignificant misfortune, or else their nature must have been extremely hard and blunted. Most natures, I believe,

have that blessed dependence born in them, though it may be a long time before an occasion calls it out. It is generally men who make the boast of self-sufficiency. They are made of ruder material, and are harder to move, than women. But you have learned the lesson of dependence; then how can you ask where I get my store of content? Have not all of us the same storehouse?"

"Ah! but that is different," said Charlotte, with perplexed eyes: "being cheerful and satisfied, like you, is different from being resigned in a forlorn way, because one cannot help one's self. I am sure I shall never feel cheerful again; but I can be resigned, so long as there is nothing else for me to do."

Mrs. Glen smiled inwardly, in spite of her sympathy: she had heard so many people say "they never should be happy again."

"Resignation is good," she answered; "but it is possible to get cheerfulness too, after a time. I cannot judge of your griefs, it is true: but mine were very severe; and yet they have worn away and left me at peace."

Charlotte was silent, watching the crumbling

glow of ashes on the hearthstone: there were tears flickering under her lowered eyelids. Mrs. Glen went on softly —

"We must all have an object in life, to bring about that end — we must make ourselves one, if none offers. There is nothing like active effort, in some good path, to reconcile us with living."

Mrs. Glen was not conscious of saying something that a great philosopher had said before her; but Charlotte recognized the bit of wisdom, and its significance.

"No: I am not altogether unfortunate," she said, looking up, with the sweet look on her face growing into a smile — "not unfortunate, dear Mrs. Glen, because I have been led here to you. You don't know how wise you are, nor how much you teach me. I shall not forget it."

CHAPTER XVI.

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

"Henri Huit, révérend," dit Mardoche, "fut veuf
De sept reines, tua deux cardinaux, dix-neuf
Évêques, treize abbés, cinq cents prieurs, soixante-
Un chanoines, quatorze archidiacres, cinquante
Docteurs, douze marquis, trois cent dix chevaliers,
Vingt-neuf barons chrétiens, et six-vingts roturiers.
Moi, je n'en tuerai qu'un" ——

—De Musset.

JOSEPH'S "revenge," as he chose to call it, was not executed *à l'improviste.* He had been several days in training to do it effectively; and after all it had not gone off quite as he anticipated. But at the same time he had been devising another little stratagem, out of which he expected to get some further satisfaction.

A week before the interview with Charlotte, he had had one with Eudoxie which was rather more agreeable to his dramatic vanity. It was

a hopeless task to try and impress Charlotte: he gave that up long ago; but Eudoxie was an easier subject — to her he was a hero at any time, without trying. A taste of the sensational once in a while being necessary to his existence, he went to enjoy it in that quarter where it was most likely to meet with appreciation.

Eudoxie was in the dining-room, her head adorned with one of the morning-caps of frills and ribbons which were sometimes efficacious in relapses of home-sickness, an immense white kitchen-apron buttoned over her dress. She was whipping eggs in a big wooden dish, and was mounted for that purpose on a chair near the window: a side-table was set out with other dishes of fluids and solids, which were shortly to form a gastronomical unit. If Eudoxie had a special taste, it was for that kind of occupation: she was on better terms with herself in a cooking-apron than under any other circumstances, in spite of her fondness for finery. She welcomed Joseph with a smile equivalent to a whole oven-full of *bouchées de crême* — a smile which might have compensated

for a plainer face than Eudoxie's. But Joseph was not much of an epicure. He merely said, —

"You feel tolerably cheerful this morning, it appears to me."

Perceiving that *he* did not, Eudoxie modified the smile a trifle. She was an ideal confidante.

"Oh! when one is busy" — she said, attacking the froth again with fresh energy. "*I' n'y a qu'ça pour se distraire!* And you, Joseph?"

"Oh, as to me — *p-f-f-f!* As gay as ever; no more and no less. You know how it goes on."

Eudoxie nodded with intelligence. "He was here last night, while you were away. He came to bring music. They sang a duo: it was marvellous!"

"Oh, of course! It is all quite appropriate. I sang at a *soirée;* I selected my favorite ballad, 'The Merciless Lady'; and in the mean time they were singing the garden duo from the 'Montecchi ed i Capuletti,' no doubt! And she is out driving at present: she will probably run across Romeo somewhere in the course of the morning. Look you here, Eudoxie, I am get-

ting to the end of my patience! I shall not continue much longer to sit meekly and watch this affair go on."

Eudoxie looked apprehensive, and the egg-whisk became slightly erratic in its motions.

"I have learned things about him which he would not wish to have known, but she has not had the information yet. He is a deceiver: she is ignorant of it. I could take a bitter revenge by letting her advance blindly into the toils which the monster prepares, but I will not descend to such a baseness! I will warn her; and, if she does not listen, I shall at least have conducted myself generously. It shall not be said that I stooped to retaliation, even though her disdain has empoisoned my existence!"

Joseph had crossed his arms, and settled back upon his left hip; deep gloom was on his brow. Traditions of Talma, of Lemaître, hovered about his spirit. The auditor was moved by this noble sentiment: she shed tears, and uttered a murmur of admiration.

"But I have one more end to accomplish," pursued Joseph with tragic intensity. "My

life is wrecked: it can expect no further happiness — it is merely a burden to me, and I will carry it no longer. I will give myself liberty!"

"What do you say, Joseph?" exclaimed Eudoxie, clasping her hands, egg-whisk and all, and creating an agitated shower of froth. "What are you thinking of? You frighten me!"

Joseph smiled, a smile of tremendous meaning.

"Life!" said he, absently toying with a lemon-squeezer which happened to lie under his hand: "what is it? — a respiration, a nothing! Why should I hesitate to extinguish it? As the great Hamlet says: 'what man would carry weights, to lament and perspire continually all his life, but for the terror of that which succeeds to death' — And I am not altogether a coward — not altogether, no!"

"You would kill yourself? O Joseph, you have lost your senses! What shall I do?"

Eudoxie set down her bowl, and commenced to cry in good earnest. Joseph made no attempt to reassure her: it was a tribute to his eloquence.

"Yes, weep for me, my good Eudoxie," said he, in a feeling voice: "your sympathy is all that remains to me now! You will think of me sometimes, *afterwards* — will you not?"

"Oh, but Joseph, you will not do such a frightful thing! You don't realize what it is. I know you will never do it!"

"Why not?" demanded Joseph laconically, balancing the lemon-squeezer on his forefinger.

"But it is an impropriety to kill one's self! it is a crime! it is as bad as killing some one else. Think of the consequences!"

"Bah! the consequences are, that one is spared the trouble of breathing any longer — a consideration which is not without its importance to an indolent person."

"Don't, Joseph! You know well enough what a suicide forfeits, by the law of the Holy Church. You know how he is held in horror by everybody, and what is destined for him in the next world. Of course you are not in earnest, or you could not talk so lightly about it. Remember how severely Father Hilaire used to speak of those wretched people who take their lives in their own hands, and of the dreadful punishment that awaits them!"

"*Ouf*, that's true! But look here, Eudoxie!" said Joseph, setting his elbows on the table with a more colloquial air: "doesn't it seem rather unfair to make it out such a terrible sin? think of all the people that do infinitely worse things all their lives, and then get absolution and dispensations and so forth, and have masses said to repose their souls; and there they are, *sains et saufs!* Take some great ruler, for example, who has been the means of killing hundreds of people in one way and another — when his end comes, he can get pardoned for all his sins, big and little, and have all the honors and ceremonies afterwards; but let some poor fellow — like me — *se faire sauter la cervelle*, with a pretty good excuse for it — enough! that's the end of him, except he serves as a text for *messieurs les abbés* to preach from. It's what I call unjust."

Eudoxie was horrified at this reckless fashion of speech.

"You are talking dreadfully!" she said, with a distressed face. "I don't understand you at all, but I hope it is only a freak. At any rate, say you were not in earnest just now, or I shall never be easy again."

"We shall see. Mind you don't tell any one — I talk to you in confidence, do you understand?"

"If I really believed you were serious, and if it would be of any use, I *would* tell some one in spite of every thing!" said Eudoxie daringly.

"And if you did," returned Joseph, "I should kill myself all the more! and perhaps I might kill you at the same time — keep that well in mind. Promise to be quiet about it — do you hear? — this instant!" and he glared at her so that she promised, with grievous misgivings.

He had, as one may easily guess, no intention whatever of destroying himself; but he cherished a very fixed idea of doing something to produce an "effect" on madame Lucas — to alarm her, and to impress her, if not with his personal value, at least with the magnitude of his slighted devotion. That idea had cost him much diligent thinking. The expedient of suicide offered some desirable features, and gave rise to a vision of the "Merciless Lady" torn with remorse over the lifeless remains. He

would have killed himself with a good grace if he could have done so temporarily; but the permanent extinction of his vital spark seemed not wholly judicious. A flesh-wound with a pistol might be effective: still it was a noisy and a smoky business, attended by a variety of grave inconveniences. Joseph's method of looking at the whole affair would certainly have been a puzzle to any level-headed Yankee or automatic Englishman, by so much as their composition differed from that of the sentimental, inflammatory young Frenchman. He was a particular specimen of a particular type, more highly strung than his neighbors, even at ordinary times; and at present worked up to an extreme pitch of that superb inconsistency which parades itself in de Musset's earlier *portraits de jeunesse.* The tragic and the trivial met in his calculations in a most fantastic way.

His intimacy with Shakespearean drama furnished the "flash of light" which helped him at last out of his perplexity. A case of suspended animation! a sleeping draught — if such a thing could be had — which would cause one to appear dead for a certain period — long

enough to terrify the household, but not long enough to risk being whisked away into a vault, *à la* mademoiselle Capulet.

Joseph had among his friends a "pharmacien," named monsieur Paul, with whom he kept up quite an intimate acquaintance, and who was naturally aware of the young man's disturbed feelings. Monsieur Paul was a gay young fellow, frisky but kind, and very well disposed toward Fleury. Here was just the person to consult. When the brilliant idea was revealed to him, in the little store where he presided, he listened to it with great inward astonishment, but maintained a grave face and heard it through attentively. When Joseph reached the important questions — "Do you know of such a liquid? Can you get it for me?" — monsieur Paul was entirely at a loss for an answer. He felt that his dignity as "pharmacien" would be compromised if he should reply, according to the fact, "I never heard of such a thing!" He rubbed his chin, and tried to look profound, under the eager stare of Joseph's great hollow black eyes.

At this crisis a thought struck him. Mon-

sieur Paul brightened up: it suddenly entered into his effervescent spirit to play a funny turn upon his friend. It was not a very original one, but it amused him extremely.

"Ah!" said he to Joseph with a mysterious wink. "I have it! Wait a moment," and he darted into a little side-office and began to search among the jars and bottles. Monsieur Paul's facetious intention was to put up a compound for his friend which should not cause him to go to sleep at all, but which, though perfectly harmless, should make him very sick indeed, so that he would not be likely to make any further researches after sleeping-draughts — beverages which monsieur Paul would esteem unprofitable and dangerous. This little pleasantry was so very funny to its inventor that he was obliged to cover his mouth, in the side-office, to prevent his amusement from reaching the ears of Joseph. Indeed, when some customers came in a great hurry, with prescriptions, he could hardly keep himself sober enough to wait on them properly, and escaped into the office as soon as possible, to finish his laugh.

"Now," said he, emerging solemnly after a few minutes, "this is what you want; you will find it very efficacious: but it must be kept stopped until used — on no account open it before, or the virtue will be lost!" and he proceeded to give instructions and cautions with regard to it, which the other received eagerly.

This fluid Joseph had had by him for several days before the excited interview with Charlotte, and it was directly after the close of that interview that he decided upon trying his little manœuvre.

He went straight to his room, and commenced his preparations. He arranged his various property in such a way as to harmonize with an expressed intention of leaving the world: he took paper, and composed a long letter to madame Lucas, which occupied considerable time. Then he took out the bottle containing his mysterious sleeping-draught. He felt considerably nervous as he loosened the cork, but relied on monsieur Paul's assurances that it was quite safe, and — emptied the bottle at one mouthful. He took the precaution to rinse it immediately, so as to leave nothing for analy-

sis, and seeing that there was no stamp on the surface, set it ostentatiously by his bedside and threw the cork out of the window. Then he lay down to await the expected drowsiness.

Mr. Baldwyn sat in his room next morning alone, with a strange complication of expressions on his face. There was between his fingers a note, over which he had been brooding for an hour or two, ever since it was handed to him. It was from Wolf Schouler, and was dated noon of the previous day.

"DEAR JOHN (it said), — "Your secret wish is accomplished — I'm off! or shall be when you read this hasty farewell. I leave to-night for — well, that's as the Destinies decide. Nobody knows that I am going: it's a sudden freak. Don't mind my not coming to say good-by — you know I abominate leave-takings. I may ramble up toward the north one of these days. Think indulgently of me, and *behalte lieb*

deinen W. S."

Baldwyn had been startled and hurt at first; then, as he pondered over it, he began to understand it better.

"How thoroughly like him!" he said by and by, with a softened look. "He has waked

up at last — very late — and he couldn't make up his mind to tell me of it. Poor fellow! I knew he could be trusted when he was once brought to reason. I wonder if"—

Here Baldwyn got up, and broke the thread of his wondering by preparing to go out. He missed Wolf wretchedly already, much as he felt that it was best to have him gone. He put the note in his pocket, and walked out on the street, feeling extremely sober. There was some business calling him to a publishing-house that morning: he went and attended to it in a dispirited kind of way, and speculated, coming down past the newspaper offices, on whether it would be best to go and see madame Lucas in the course of the day — which at present he rather dreaded to do.

Some busy fellow, tearing out of one of those dens and charging blindly up stairs several steps at a leap, was very near upsetting Baldwyn, and brought his moderate descent to a standstill.

"Oh! beg your pardon, Baldwyn — rather hurried — didn't observe you! What's the news? Singular affair up in —— Street, isn't it? Some-

body told me you knew the parties — or something of the kind."

"I haven't heard of any affair in —— Street," said Baldwyn slowly. "What is it?"

"Why, at the French house, you know — the aristocratic widow: don't remember her name. Young fellow poisoned — lady ran away — thought everybody had heard of it by this time."

"What!" said Baldwyn, "what is that? Say it again — some one *poisoned*, do you say?"

"Yes: a Frenchman, musician I believe. Perhaps you may know him: I can't recall those French names. Policeman found him in the street, and took him to the hospital; sent after the lady of the house as soon as they learned where he lived — nowhere to be found! Nobody knew any thing about it — she'd flitted! It looks very queer indeed; may be explained, of course — the lady belongs in first-class society. There! — *Lucas* — that's the name. Why couldn't I think before?"

"It's a lie!" shouted out Baldwyn, furiously clutching the other by the arm. "It's that — that scoundrel Fleury — I know him! Has

any thing happened to her? is she safe? did you say she had gone away?"

He had turned so white and looked so ferocious that the other was very much concerned.

"Oh, yes! she is safe enough: no doubt she is all right. I don't say, you know — it's just a coincidence, very likely. It was unfortunate she happened to go away, that's all. I didn't suppose she was a friend of yours."

"Do you mean to say that anybody dares to implicate her?" demanded Baldwyn in a deep voice. "Let me tell you, then, it's all a plot. I know them all — she is my friend. Tell that to everybody — stop their mouths if they venture to use madame Lucas's name. The ruffians! Mind you, Parkes, put an end to it, will you? for my sake!"

The other was overwhelmed, and began to make all sorts of promises and apologies.

"I must go there at once. If only she is safe!" Baldwyn went down the stairs much faster than Parkes had come up, and dashed into the first conveyance he could find to carry him to —— Street.

"A plot!" said the bewildered Parkes, re-

suming his ascent. "Well, maybe it is. By Jove! Does he think a man goes and takes poison just by way of inconveniencing somebody else? I'm sorry I startled him so. I'd no idea he was intimate there."

It was hopeless to try and suppress the story now, for anybody's sake. It was a common topic already, and did indeed admit of very "queer" interpretations. All the circumstances of the case united to give it a most dubious air. Joseph, on being picked up in the street, was unable to give any account of himself. He had waited in his room for the approach of unconsciousness until there was no possible doubt that it was not coming, and that he was experiencing some very strange sensations. He started up in great apprehension; the odd feelings increased rapidly and frightfully.

Alas, monsieur Paul! what unlucky elements had blundered into that pharmaceutical joke of yours?

Joseph's first confused idea — his head was in a terrible whirl — was to set out after a doctor. Somehow his existence seemed to acquire an unusual value at that moment; *vite, au*

médecin! Out he went, without stopping to call any one in the house; but the whirl kept increasing — he felt the most extraordinary symptoms, until about a block or so away he fell down helpless, and was taken possession of by a policeman — a highly mysterious but undoubted "poisoning-case."

The unknown compound which he had swallowed found an excellent field of action in his unstrung system. At the hospital he was delirious, and the doctors had a case of high fever as well as poisoning to work over. They found his address, and sent a messenger to —— Street, where the two women were already wondering and crying over Charlotte's absence. When they were made to understand, with some difficulty, what had happened to Joseph, they were overpowered. Eudoxie, remembering his wild talk and threats, cast herself on the sofa in hysterics, calling out frantically, "O Charlotte! Charlotte! it is you who have done it!"

The messenger was no French scholar; but he somehow caught the sense of the exclamation, and made a suspicious memorandum of it in his mind.

Eudoxie was for going off to the hospital at once, but madame de Presles would not be left alone; and the two kept up a distracted watch for Charlotte until midnight, and then lay dozing and lamenting by turns through the long hours till daybreak. Baldwyn, arriving there midway of the forenoon, found the door ajar, and walked directly in. There was no sign of any one's presence about: he quite shivered at the stillness. The music-room was vacant: only Dagobert, wrapped in morbid silence, sat on his perch and turned up a speculative eye at the anxious visitor. Somebody had left a window open: a cold draught rushed through and flirted a sheet of music off the piano to Baldwyn's feet. He picked it up, noticing, as he did so, that Wolf's name, in his own handwriting, was scrawled across the top. While he was hesitating, and looking at Dagobert as though the wise-eyed bird could give him some information if he chose, there were quick steps outside; and madame de Presles came into the room. For the first time in her life the quiet housekeeper became voluble: she grasped Baldwyn's hand, and poured out the whole story

with such bursts of tears and excitement as he would not have thought her capable of.

"And oh, monsieur Baldwyn, if you could only find her! It is inconceivable that she should have left us so! we cannot imagine the motive. Some harm must have befallen her, I am sure of it! and there is that dreadful affair of Joseph's — I know he did it himself, but it must have such a singular appearance to people outside. And I cannot talk English enough to try and explain to any one what I think — but you will, monsieur Baldwyn, will you not? it would be terrible to have any one fancy a connection between that accident and my Charlotte's disappearance!"

"Have no fear of that," said Baldwyn, in a resolute voice: "I will take it into my hands. She shall be found: she shall be brought back. It is all incomprehensible now, but I do not believe that any harm has come to her. It shall be explained soon. I commence the search at once."

Poor madame de Presles was melted with gratitude: she had all possible faith in Mr. Baldwyn. But, firmly as he spoke, he was full of perplexity, starting off on his blind errand.

"I hope my wits will not abandon me!" he murmured, trying to straighten out his whirling thoughts, as he was being driven back toward his rooms. "I haven't a clew to follow! and I don't know who could give me any suggestions. Yet I would like to consult somebody — yes, there's O'Brien! I will see O'Brien, and talk it over with him."

And he directed his driver accordingly; and wasted much nervous force on the way in hoping with all his might that Justus would be quickly come at. Fortune favored him: before he was in sight of O'Brien's headquarters, he espied that person hurrying along the street, and nearly broke a cab-window in trying to check the driver. O'Brien saw him at the same moment. He had just heard the sensational bit of news, and was aghast when he looked at Charlotte's furtive departure in the light of this intelligence. The instant he perceived Baldwyn, with a harassed face, being driven furiously in a cab, he understood the latter's errand, and promptly responded to his signal.

"This is a bad business, O'Brien!" said the other dejectedly, leaning out at the cab-door.

"That it is!" Justus agreed. "What do you make of it?"

"Make of it? Why, Fate has played us all a cruel trick by contriving madame Lucas's absence at such a time! I can't account for any of it; but one thing is positive — she must be found at once!"

"Yes — she must be found at once," repeated Justus, pondering. "Are you sure that her absence was premeditated — that it's not some accident that may have kept her?"

"There's evidence that she did not mean to come back directly: they tell me she carried away a little bag, with some small articles, a heavy furred cloak, and a travelling-shawl."

"Two shawls — there were two," corrected Justus, with an absent air: "one was a very heavy one, with tassels" —

"How do you know that? *You've seen her!*"

Justus looked up, paused a moment, and deliberated.

"This is a case," he said finally, with an air of conviction, "where a promise is better broken than kept. Yes, John, I've seen her."

"You know where she is?"

"I know where she is."

"Then, for heaven's sake, tell me, and let me go after her! Don't you realize how important it is that she should be brought home as soon as possible? It's a matter of *reputation*, O'Brien!"

"Yes, I see. In order to save her that, I'll have to break my promise; but I've broken half of it already. She came to me, the deuce knows why — and I advised her where to go. And she begged me to be quiet about it — as I should have been, but for this."

"Get in here, O'Brien. What order shall I give the driver?"

"Grand Union Depot."

"Grand Union Depot, driver, as fast as you can. — Now" — shutting the door — "more about it! What did she say?"

"Well," said Justus, knitting his brow reflectively, "she was excited. She frightened me at first, but I kept cool. She wanted me to suggest some place out of town where she could go for a little while; and no one was to know of it but myself. I was thunderstruck:

but I happened to think of a place in Westervale; and, when I mentioned it, she took it up directly, and made the shortest work deciding — it actually took my breath away. She had those two shawls and the bag, and she was wrapped up in the cloak with fur on it. And when the story came out about Fleury's getting poisoned so mysteriously, that same afternoon, I was completely floored by it — I was, by Jove! You don't suppose, Baldwyn — you can't think" —

"No, I can't think, and I don't suppose!" retorted Baldwyn, cutting him off sternly. "I know what you mean; and I know you wouldn't seriously entertain a doubt of madame Lucas any more than I would — otherwise I should be constrained to knock you down immediately, though you *are* two or three times my weight!"

"And you'd be justified in doing it, John — if you could," returned the amiable colossus. "No, I don't doubt her in the least; and yet, I will confess — if you can restrain your wrath — that *at first*, for an infinitesimal space of time, it did strike me as a very — remarkable — coincidence!"

"Well, I can hardly blame you for that," observed the other, with the faint suspicion of a smile. "It *was* so — and we can imagine how it must seem to other people, when it even occasioned a moment's dreadful uncertainty to those who" —

"Well — to those who" —

"— Who are interested in her welfare," concluded Baldwyn rather artificially. But the two pairs of eyes looked at each other, and appeared to make some silent emendation of the clause.

"By the way, John," said Justus, after a minute's quiet inspection of the street, "where's Schouler? What does he say to all this? I should have thought he would be with you today."

"I can't say where he is now: his visit here is over. He left St. Leon yesterday, at noon."

"Left St. Leon! Then, by Jove" —

Justus sat up with the air of having a solution within reach; but it seemed to escape him by slow degrees, until he settled back again, saying hopelessly, "No: I don't see an inch farther into it! I give it up."

"It's beyond all of us, Justus," the other exclaimed, with a friendly touch of the hand. "It's all been a complicated and generally miserable affair — I see that now. I have myself to thank for some things: the worst of it is that there are no amends to be made. All that I can do now is to help straighten out this particular tangle; and I'm on the way to it by the Westervale train."

"Perhaps," suggested Justus, "as she thinks no one knows her retreat except myself, it would be less startling to her if *I* should go instead of you."

Baldwyn hesitated a moment, and then thought of Wolf.

"No," said he immediately: "it is better that I should go. There are good reasons why. One of these days perhaps I can be more frank with you, old fellow: they are not my own secrets that I have to handle at present. There's the station! You have helped me all you can, Justus: there's nothing more you can do but to give me the address, and follow me with your good wishes."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE FIELD.

Dante, why say'st thou the supremest woe
Is happy memories recalled in days of pain?
What stern regret taught thee that bitter word,
That sorrow-mocking strain?

. . . . . .

No! by that blessed ray whose splendor burneth pure,
'Twas not thy heart that spoke the vaunted blasphemy!
More real on earth than happiness may prove
A happy memory.

—De Musset: *Un Souvenir.*

STRANGE arrivals from the city were not very numerous in Westervale at that season of the year. Therefore, when Mrs. Glen, through her buttery window, observed a tall and gentlemanly unknown descending from a stage at the gate, her mind instantly connected the circumstance with her brown-eyed guest, for whom she already assumed a sort of championship. Mrs. Glen had two minds about letting him in at first: madame Lucas had said

nothing about any visitors, and how was one to know whether this person ought to be regarded as friend or foe? Madame Lucas was not there to ask: she had gone for a solitary walk in the field near by.

Mrs. Glen went softly to the front-door, and examined the stranger's face though a protective loophole in the curtain; as the result of which she unlocked the door, and opened it with quite an amiable air. His manner and tone completed the favorable impression. Mrs. Glen was accustomed to rely on her instinct for her estimates of strangers; and she felt sure that there was nothing behind those pale, kindly-serious features that demanded any barring of the gates in her pretty guest's behalf. She was reassured to that extent that she directed him without hesitation to look for madame Lucas in the fields, and went out and pointed him the way.

Charlotte had been wandering for nearly an hour in the fresh wind, watching the mountains of clouds, and marvelling at the quiet that allowed her to hear the brown grass crisping under her steps. She had found her equilib-

rium again, but not without much bitterness and resentful swelling of spirit. Her memory had just taken her back to the day when Baldwyn brought Wolf to her house for the first time. She sang for him; it was a sunny morning; she remembered admiring his broad forehead with the brown hair rolling up from it, and noticing how deep and expressive his large gray eyes were. If Mr. Baldwyn could have just taken a little glance ahead, surely he would not have brought Wolf with him to Maison-de-Presles, that bright morning.

"Why did you bring him? Why were you so blind?" Charlotte said half-aloud, standing up with her hands clasped. As she spoke, turning slightly and lifting her eyes, there was the object of her apostrophe, tall and pale-faced, coming, like a spirit responsive to an invocation, across the level field. She was hardly startled, he was such a part of her reflections. Baldwyn felt an odd mixture of gladness and shrinking as he drew near. She stood between him and the west; a straight dark silhouette, scarcely recognizable in the long shawl wrapped close over her hair, where only a glistening

fringe blew loose and fluttered around her forehead. She looked at him steadily: there was something grave and almost repelling in her eyes.

"How did you know where to find me?" she asked, in soft, cold tones. "Is *no* one to be trusted, after all?— Why did you come here?"

"Why did *you* come here?" he returned sadly. "A worse mistake could not have been made, as it happens. I have come to call you home again at once: something has occurred which makes it necessary."

Her eyes fastened themselves quickly on his face; they grew larger and seemed to wait with intense questioning for an explanation; but she did not speak.

"It is providential that I was able to find you so soon. An accident has happened — to Mr. Fleury."

"Ah!" she said, drawing a soft breath, and shutting her eyelids with a curious air of relief.

"He was found yesterday afternoon on the street in a helpless state, and carried to the hospital. He had been poisoned."

"Poisoned!" she exclaimed, in a low, amazed voice. "And how, *mon Dieu?*"

"That is unexplained: they find it very unaccountable. If he made the attempt upon himself, they cannot understand why he should have gone into the street afterwards; and there was no trace of poison to be found anywhere about the house — nothing to attract notice except a harmless-looking phial in his room. It occurred about the middle of the afternoon."

"Is it possible!" Charlotte murmured. He saw in her shocked face that she was beginning to realize the situation, and that he should not have to urge her return to the city.

"I thank you, Mr. Baldwyn, for coming," she said, holding out her hand. "I understand. I was not cordial to you, but you will overlook that. The unfortunate boy! I did not believe in his threats — we had some stormy scenes, and he threatened his own life; but I thought it was nothing more than bravado. Can they not save him? is it hopeless?"

"Possibly they can save him: I have not seen his physicians."

"I did not think he would have dared to do

it. He said some very savage things to me — it would have been unpardonable if his brain had not been disordered. And, by the way, he told me also as a piece of news — which was quite uncalled for — that your friend Mr. Schouler is married. That was true, was it?"

"Yes," Baldwyn answered, with a slight effort, "it was true."

"Was it not a little singular in Mr. Schouler to make a secret of it?" Charlotte said, holding herself very straight, and speaking with an air of cool equanimity. "I think that you also are open to the charge of singularity in keeping it so quiet. Why not have mentioned it with his other *characteristics* in that synopsis you once gave me of him?"

"Indeed," Baldwyn said, in a low, regretful tone, "I would have! I did not want it kept a secret. That was a whim of his — for which he may have had better reasons than any he gave me. It must have been a skeleton in the closet to him, that secret; he could not bear to speak of it, even to me: and I know nothing but the mere fact."

"You think it makes him unhappy?" she

said, with a slightly softened note in her voice, stirring the brown grass with her foot.

"Who should know that better than you?" returned Baldwyn almost reproachfully.

She looked up at him, an impatient flash springing from her eyes.

"He did not confide his secrets to me," she said haughtily, over her shoulder.

"No: but he was afraid of doing so. He has gone from St. Leon: he took his departure yesterday without saying good-by to me."

Charlotte made a little indistinct murmur, as if she were going to speak; a fixed look came into her face; she walked away several steps, and stood like a statue turning toward the west.

"Had you not better trust me, Charlotte?" said Baldwyn, watching her sadly. "Are you so strong that you have no use for me?"

She kept her unresponsive attitude for a moment or two, and then, as if suddenly breaking through some restraint, turned and stepped back impetuously.

"Was it not an ignoble — a heartless thing to do?" she exclaimed: "can you wonder that I blamed you for allowing it? You stood by

and saw him amuse himself — oh, yes, it was very pleasant and very entertaining for him to come and sing and read and bring flowers, and for you to watch the comedy! — and you knew well enough what an influence he has, and what it would all come to — Mr. Baldwyn, you *were* to blame!"

"You misunderstand him!" cried Baldwyn, taking fire in his turn: "you misunderstand both of us! He was unwise, indeed; but designing, *never!* He may have self-conceit enough; but it was dormant in this case, for he never dreamed of danger to you. He blinded himself to his imprudence, thinking that the only risk would be for himself; and now that the risk has become too plain to be ignored, he has taken the wise course, and — gone. Without ever suspecting that you would give more than a careless thought to his going."

"Is that true?" Charlotte asked slowly, her eyes veiled in meditation. "I may really believe that I was mistaken? — I may think well of him, after all?"

"It would be hard indeed if *you* were to misjudge him! With all his thoughtlessness —

and heaven knows he has plenty of that! — he has honor at heart. At the first he was reckless and perverse; but when his reason was aroused, he did his best to repair the error. It may have been his fault that he lost his freedom by those circumstances which are so — so obscure to us; but at least it was not his fault that you taught him the extent of the loss."

Charlotte lifted up her thick lashes again: they glistened, and her large eyes were full of light. The rigid look had melted from her face; its softer lines had come back; she was even smiling.

"Thank you, once more," she said, moving nearer to him: "it seems that I am destined to be continually in your debt for something. This last is a heavier debt than you imagine; I don't know how to measure my thanks. You will let my gratitude make up for the ugly things I said to you, will you not? You see, I was so very unhappy!"

"But I don't comprehend," Baldwyn said, gravely wondering at her radiant look, "what great solace I have afforded you. I come like a bird of ill-omen — a messenger with evil tidings.

The only welcome part of my service has been to restore your faith in the man you were misinterpreting" —

"And do you call that nothing?" she exclaimed earnestly. "Then you can have no idea how dreadful it was for me to condemn him! Imagine any thing more wretched than the sense that one's deepest sympathies — the best of one's life — have been cast away before a hollow image, in a deceptive shrine!"

"You ask me too much," said Baldwin, the trace of a melancholy smile passing across his lips: "I can not imagine that. But I am heartily thankful if I have been so lucky as to bring you a grain of consolation, even unwittingly. Few people would feel as you do. With most the actual loss — the separation— would outweigh and banish every other idea. I am glad you are not like that. I was even afraid that you would find a further bitterness when you came to realize the different sequel that might have been reached" —

"Ah, what a mistake that was!" Charlotte said, shaking her head gently. "For now, you see, I can keep my jewels of memories without

a blur on their brightness. I almost think I would not exchange them for the most dazzling happiness that could be offered. Why, if I never see him again for the rest of my days — as truly I never shall — is it not enough, and more than I deserve, to know that he belongs to *me?* Yes, he does — you need not look surprised: wherever he goes — and wherever I go — he belongs to me — *à moi seule!* The strongest regret I can feel now is, that we might not have shared that thought together before he went; but, after all, it may be best as it is. He would not, perhaps, have looked at it as I do. He might have railed at the good Fates; for he *is* a trifle thoughtless, is he not? You must watch over him when you can — I commit him to you."

She spoke in a soft, lingering voice, as if it pleased her to hear herself talking freely on this theme.

"Is this the stuff a coquette's heart is made of?" thought Baldwyn, his own half stifled with sympathy. "O Wolf, Wolf!"

Charlotte's mind wandered away for a brief moment; a sort of still radiance diffused itself

over her face, as of one who has forgotten all about the immediate world and its inhabitants.

"And now come," she said, recalling herself, and laying her fingers lightly on his arm: "we must lose no more time. Poor madame de Presles — you saw her? these have been severe days for her, I know! How selfish I was! Ah, I am going to be different after this!"

Mrs. Glen was a sedate little person, as seldom pricked with curiosity as any of her sex; but if ever she had suffered with that tyrannical affection in her life, it was when she took a mystified farewell of her visitors, and saw madame Lucas's face, with the heavy paleness all gone, look out from the stage and positively smile at her in the twilight.

"They've had a quarrel, and made up," she reflected acutely. "They are engaged, of course; but I should have liked to know a little more about it! — A Roman Catholic! Well, I'm sure she is a very sweet-faced one; and she seems rational enough, all but the string of beads! I don't like the look of that, and no doubt it's only a sample of their hea-

thenish forms and delusions. People tell me that the Roman religion is a perfect web of superstitions. It's a dreadful thing — is superstition!"

And she hastily retired indoors to avoid "watching the coach out of sight" — which every prudent person would admit to be a very bad sign.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHANGES.

Homme, tu n'es qu'un songe rapide, un rêve douloureux!
— CHÂTEAUBRIAND.

"ST. LEON is not the worst place in the world to come home to," soliloquized a large, gray-haired gentleman, casting a friendly glance upon the well-filled street previous to penetrating into one of its substantial buildings. It was Mr. Gregory, just returned from his journeyings; and it was Mrs. Lake's studio to which he presently mounted with a vigorous tread.

He had been travelling the greater part of the year, now "roughing it" among the sierras of Mexico, and now "taking it easy" as his erratic route traversed some more or less social community. His face was invested with a healthy mask of tan, souvenir of Mexican sunrays; his eye was as clear as a hawk's under

his grizzled eyebrows. During those days of wandering he had had no communication with the "Lotos-eaters," and he was impatient to renew the suspended intercourse.

Mrs. Lake sat alone before her easel: there was a brush between her fingers, but she had forgotten it; and it was making a vicious trail of raw umber on her clean painting-wrapper. Her gaze rested on the canvas with an air of very slight interest in the "portrait of a young girl," whose pale-blue eyes and unobtrusive nose looked forth, as reciprocally bored.

"I wish I had not agreed to paint this creature!" she murmured in mild distaste. "I can't even idealize her. Why is it that I come across so few faces nowadays that are worth painting? If my imagination fails, I shall have to take to landscape by and by, after all."

And her eyes rose wistfully toward a figure on the wall, in Venetian costume, playing with a goldfinch on its dimpled wrist.

At Mr. Gregory's knock, the languid artist merely turned her head, and called "Come in!" as one who is too universally indifferent to expect any gratifying arrival.

"Still at work! just as I left you. Is it possible that I have been away a year?" the old gentleman exclaimed, advancing with his animated smile. "You look at me as if I were a ghostly visitant; but did you ever see one with such a mountaineer's complexion?"

"Welcome back!" said Mrs. Lake, recovering from her surprise; and then, as they shook hands cordially, he was rather shocked to see her eyes suddenly overflow with tears. He thought she must have sustained some great loss. But a toy brig capsized in a dish of water close by, with other childish properties scattered around, reassured him on Master Davey's account.

"What is it?" he inquired, hesitating. "I see that something has occurred."

"It was the sight of you that brought it back to me. — Things are so changed here now, with our friends. Did you expect to find them as you left them — the circle intact? I am almost the only one who remains. She" — Mrs. Lake's eye turned once more to the picture on the wall — "you know what friends we were — I have lost her."

"*Lost* her?"

"Yes. She has gone away — back to her own country. Ah! there is a long story about it all: and there was a little mystery too, which I never penetrated; but that was of small consequence to me, when Charlotte was gone."

They sat down before the image of madame Lucas: the old gentleman lifted up to it a sad, perplexed gaze.

"I anticipated seeing her," he said in a troubled voice: "it never occurred to me that I might not. How long since she left you?"

"It was last autumn — in November — that she went. Every thing seemed to happen at once: I never knew such a series of happenings. Within a month we were broken up and scattered — completely. Jenny Winter and I were left to console each other."

"And how? What were the disturbing elements? Did that Fleury have a hand in it?"

"Well, yes, he did, at the first. It was very sensational — just his way, you remember. He was poisoned: it was a terrible case, really. And he had a fever, and lost his reason for a great many days; and, worst of all, just before

they found him in that state, my poor Charlotte had taken a notion to set off somewhere, alone, in the most mysterious way, frightening her people half to death. It seemed afterwards that she simply took a fancy to go out of town for a little while; and she came back the next day, when she heard about Joseph Fleury; but — you'll hardly believe it, Mr. Gregory — I was told that people actually began to talk and speculate upon *Charlotte's share* in the affair."

"Miserable babblers!" said Mr. Gregory hotly.

"Fortunately it was all explained in a day or two, and rather a ridiculous light thrown upon it. Madame de Presles produced a letter which she found in Joseph's room, addressed to Charlotte, and claiming to be his last words before leaving the world! madame de Presles had hidden it at first, not liking to have Charlotte's name handled in such connections. And directly after that, there popped up the most absurd little French druggist — speaking the queerest English! — who gave a full explanation. It appeared that Joseph went and begged this man for some drug to put him in a trance,

in order to alarm Charlotte; but the man, by way of a joke, made him up what he supposed to be a moderate dose of antimony! It turned out that he had blundered, and put up a mixture which was very near making an end of Mr. Fleury and his eccentricities."

"I'm sorry it didn't!" said Mr. Gregory earnestly. "What's become of him?"

"Oh! he recovered, after a while. But everybody was laughing over the story, and it was not long before he changed his residence. I have been told that he went to New York, where he used to live. My dear Charlotte had already left the city, weeks before."

Mrs. Lake cried a little at this point, and showed a ring which slipped around rather loosely on her slender finger. "This was her parting souvenir to me. I saw her but once after the trouble with Joseph, and then she said not a word about going away. She was as sweet as ever, and seemed even fonder than usual of Davey and me; still I felt that she was in some way altered. There was another look in her face — something beautiful, but quite strange to me. She brought a little watch-

guard for Davey, with a bit of her hair in the locket, and made him promise always to wear it, and keep her in mind. We laughed because she was so earnest about it. And a week or so afterwards she sent me the ring in a letter of farewell. She wrote that 'France was drawing her back; that though she knew no home-sickness, and should always regret the friends left in America, she felt that there would be a sweetness in French air, and a music in French voices, that she did not appreciate when she lived among them.' She asked me to share the farewells with those friends whom she was compelled to omit. Madame de Presles, of course, went with her. As for the girl — Eudoxie — she furnished another romantic item. You may not have known it, but she was perfectly bewitched with Joseph Fleury all along. She went to see him at the hospital when he was beginning to improve a little; and I don't know what he said to her, but she absolutely refused to sail for home with Charlotte. She staid behind, and helped take care of him; and they say that when he recovered, he married her and took her to New York!"

"What a sequel to Fleury's exalted romance!" said Mr. Gregory, with sarcastic amusement. "And where, all this time, were our friends Baldwyn and Schouler?"

"It was very singular," returned Mrs. Lake thoughtfully, "that Mr. Schouler left St. Leon just at the beginning of the end, as one may say, and just in Charlotte's manner, without any warning or leave-taking. No one knows where he went."

"It is strange enough!" Mr. Gregory said gravely. "I should have thought it would turn out very differently" —

"And I too," the lady answered. "But we needn't speculate about it now. They are both gone; and if their paths should ever cross again, we wish them joy most earnestly. My poor Charlotte! — Mr. Baldwyn, too, is a wanderer at present. It is understood that he had business calling him from the city, soon after Mr. Schouler left him; so that he knows nothing about Charlotte's home-going. It will be a shock to him when he returns; for I suspect that he too used to find Maison-de-Presles something of a magnet."

"That's natural enough," said Mr. Gregory. "My young friend O'Brien escaped through sheer callousness, I should say — the better luck for him!"

"Don't be too sure of that," Mrs. Lake said knowingly. "But a touch of sentiment won't hurt that young man — quite a violent attack of it, indeed, would have no bad effect on him. Dear Charlotte was almost capable of waking up a statue with one of her smiles."

They both smiled reminiscently as they looked up at the fair Venetian, with the soft shadow of eyelashes on her laughing cheek.

"Ah, well, the times all change, and we with them!" Mrs. Lake said pensively. "I have given you a long sketch of our old associates: now it is your turn to tell me a little of your own plans. Shall you settle down in St. Leon for a while? or will you be off a-roving again in a week or so?"

"That depends," Mr. Gregory answered: "whether I settle down here or go back to Mexico depends on — a little matter of business. In fact," he added casually, "on you."

"On *me!*" exclaimed Mrs. Lake, giving him

an astonished look, and turning pink with surprise to the roots of her golden hair.

"I take the liberty of saying so," returned the old gentleman in a placid and serious tone. "Has any one been around here with matrimonial propositions while I have been gone?"

"*No!*" replied the amazed lady emphatically, the bloom on her cheeks increasing in compound ratio.

"So much the better for my chances! I present myself as a candidate. Will you do me the honor to consider my suggestion? I should be very devoted to David's interest, I am sure. It's — it's entirely on his account, you understand."

Mrs. Lake leaned back, and burst into an uncontrollable laugh. Mr. Gregory smiled naïvely, as though he appreciated the joke.

"You blessed man!" she exclaimed, fanning her red cheeks. "Really, I'm infinitely obliged to you; but Davey and I get on so well alone, that we couldn't think of changing the *régime*. He never would consent to it."

"Hadn't you better make it a subject of deliberation?" urged Mr. Gregory with some anx-

iety. "I'm afraid you are replying rather too hastily."

"Oh, indeed! it would make no difference if I should deliberate a year," Mrs. Lake answered, with dancing eyes. "My reply would be quite the same in anybody's case, I assure you. But I wouldn't go back to Mexico just now, if I were you."

"Do you really think I hadn't better? Well, perhaps not at present; but ultimately I shall be sure to. I believe there's nothing equal to Mexican air for disappointments! — By the way, I have some very curious birds that I managed to bring home — remarkably fine plumage. If I thought you would be willing to accept them" —

"Why, you are too kind! How delightful! of course I should. But it was quite too bad of you to tease me so, though I might have known at once you were in joke."

"I wasn't, really," said the old gentleman, drawing on his glove with neatness. "But, as it is evidently a lost case, there is nothing further to be said. I'll go and have the birds sent up directly. — It's a great pity, however — it

certainly is! I am sure I could have made myself exceedingly useful to David!"

Mrs. Lake laughed and cried together after he had shut the door, and threw a tearful kiss to Charlotte on the wall as she returned to her monotonous painting.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CABIN BY THE SHORE.

Nun legt' ich gern mich hin und schlief'
Unweckbar, traumlos, still und tief!

— Fr. Halm.

THERE is no prettier bay among the great lakes than the one which holds King's Point in its blue embrace. Lines of forest run along its curving coast, and are repeated on its beautiful surface. The King's Point dock-head is a place of general attraction to the townspeople, after the winter's ice has broken and floated down into the lake; but on this particular day the loungers appeared to have some unusual subject of interest as they stood about discussing in motley groups. There had been a departure that morning; and though some hours had passed since it took place, they were still hanging around the pier, and spying fruitlessly over the water.

Meantime, a small cockle-shell of a boat was skimming along the edge of the bay, carrying two silent passengers. One was a rugged, brown-armed Scotchman, whose long oar-strokes took the little skiff in an easy flight past the varying shores; the other seemed to be a stranger in the region, and sat gazing ahead with an anxious look on his thin sharp-cut face. *His* silence was evidently enforced; for several times he had tried to engage in conversation with his taciturn boatman, and each time had been obliged to give it up. The brawny Gael was either economical of breath, or limited in the gift of communication.

"Is it much farther, Alec?" the other asked at last, staring impatiently at the unbroken reach of land, and pulling out his watch under that aimless impulse which besets the uneasy traveller.

"Na, s'r," responded Alec concisely, in a queer nasal voice.

"I'm glad to hear that. Are we as much as half an hour away, should you think?"

"Na, s'r."

"It's a long stretch," Baldwyn murmured,

drawing a long breath of fatigue. "I feel so hurried. It's intolerable to sit still and fold one's arms, but there's nothing better to do. — Put us ahead, my man!"

Alec considered that no response at all was required to this remark, beyond a comprehensive nod of his flapping hat-brim. The boat was already making its steady path as swiftly as human muscle could impel it. But there was good cause for Baldwyn's haste: somewhere on that wild shore-line, he knew not where — in a cabin, unattended, as he believed, by any familiar or tender hands, his friend lay ill. The report had reached him by mere chance in St. Leon: he had started at the earliest moment, and found it confirmed on reaching King's Point, where everybody seemed to know Wolf, and spoke of his misfortune with the sort of interest that people show in the illness of an illustrious friend. Baldwyn asked no questions further than "how to get to him," and "the best guide to take." People talked at great length about Wolf; but he hardly knew what they were saying, he was so eager to get away.

And now, as he sat shading his eyes with his hand, though the sky was gray and sunless, Alec began to head the boat toward a landing which suddenly revealed itself.

"Thank Heaven!" said Baldwyn sincerely: "I couldn't have stood it much longer."

But there were no more hints of habitation at that point than had appeared all along their course.

"I see no sign of a cabin," Baldwyn said, as he sprang to land — "not so much as a shed. Didn't you say it was close by the water?"

"It's a bit along," replied Alec, fastening his boat. "Ye'll see it presently: there's no other about."

Baldwyn walked up the shore of the bay, with the cool land-breeze blowing in his face. The cabin of which they had told him was disclosed, lonesome-looking, with dark hills for a background. There were no signs of care or interest about the place: the little house had a hut-like, temporary air, with no charm but the vast charm of Nature lying around it in steadfast loneliness. A dog, chained up somewhere out of sight, was making a most

deplorable howling at intervals. Baldwyn wondered whether he should really find any living thing in the precincts — unless it might be that unseen animal, crying like an unquiet spirit — so great and intense was the pervading solitude. He glanced back toward the point of landing: his guide had left the boat, and was meandering about among the shrubs along the path, a queer figure, stooping like a wizard hunting for the magic herb.

"It's *uncanny!*" murmured Baldwyn, adopting the Gaelic phrase as the most appropriate to the situation. His mind went back to that last visit to Charlotte — that hurried search and strange interview — and the same shivering sense of unreality possessed him as had invested that anxious ride through the Westervale woods, and the meeting in the wide, sunset field. He stood still in the pathway, and sighed — a dreary sigh, from the depths of his kindly, hard-tried heart.

"It seems to be my mission in life," he said wistfully, "to play mediator, and to travel about, like Goethe's 'Mittler,' on other people's errands instead of my own. A good mission

enough, and fertile of reward. But human nature is very grasping. One would like a little more for one's self, sometimes!"

In the next moment he shook himself angrily for having admitted the thought at such a time. The guide Alec, whose attention was divided between his employer's movements and the occupation of filling his pipe, was now seen to lift an arm and point along the pathway. This gesture turning Baldwyn's observation back to the cabin, he perceived a woman's figure in the doorway, considering the new comer with some wondering hesitancy. He took off his hat as he walked towards her; but the courtesy did not effect any change in her expression, which was far from cordial. A face that might have been otherwise quite agreeable was rendered unmistakably forbidding by the strangely suspicious and hostile look under her black eyebrows. Baldwyn's quick survey of this young person took in the short rough dress, the dark, Indian-looking features and heavy plaited hair, the muscular hands, the general air of force and uncouth dignity. He had a strong suspicion of beauty in this face,

in spite of its square, high cheek-bones and weather-beaten skin. But, while he took note of these things, he was making inquiries, with a politely conciliatory manner, about the friend he had come to seek.

"Do you know how sick he is?" asked the woman abruptly, after a silent examination of his face.

"I have heard that he was very ill," replied Baldwyn, "and I have travelled many miles with all possible speed to find him. I have been — his friends have been greatly distressed about him."

"Where do you come from?" was the next requisition, in a sharp and anxious tone. Baldwyn gave that information as briefly as might be, and added gently, "He is a very dear friend of mine, and I am only desirous of securing his comfort. You will permit me to see him, I am sure — if you are in charge of him, as I infer" —

"How did you know he was staying here?"

"They told me so at King's Point. I brought a guide who knows the place well, so that there could be no mistake."

"Well, sir," said the woman, stepping back to let him pass, "you must come in, then. He is in the next room. He will be glad to see you, I suppose."

There were only two rooms in the cabin. As Baldwyn stepped toward the inner door he heard a sigh, heavy and impatient, from this unfriendly sentinel; and, glancing back, saw that she was twisting her hands together in a sort of distress, and that the hard expression of her face, looking after him, had given way to one utterly dejected and miserable. She went out immediately; and he heard her hushing the dog, who had burst into clamor again at the neighborhood of a stranger.

Some one inside the room spoke faintly in a questioning tone. Baldwyn hardly found any thing familiar in the tired and tremulous voice. Was it all that was left of the strong, clear tenor that used to be the glory of the *Commerz* in their old university days?

"Wolf, my dear boy! Don't be startled, it's Baldwyn: don't move, dear fellow."

For Wolf, at sight of the tall figure entering, had sprung up almost straight, but dropped

back upon his elbow in a moment. He was lying on a cot-bed drawn up close under the rude window, whence he could look out at the great stretch of blue water, and the newly-budded trees near its shore. He did not look so very unlike himself as his friend had imagined; still, his face, that used to be so full and brown, was fair as a child's, and so thin that the cheeks were great hollows above the curly brown beard: his hair had been cut short, and was pushed off the high forehead, showing it as white as wax. Baldwyn remembered his blue-veined sensitive temples, and saw them now yet more transparent: his large eyes looked larger than ever, but with the same kind, merry look in their depths. He could scarcely hold out his hand, he was so shaken with excitement and delight; and his great eyes filled with tears as Baldwyn put him gently back on his pillow and sat down, holding his thin fingers.

"I'm afraid, Wolf, you're not strong enough to talk to me."

"Oh, yes, yes, I am! but I want to hear *you* talk. You don't know how glad I am! How did you find me? My dear friend, I've thought

of you, and dreamed of you; but I never dared to think you would come" —

"Don't talk so fast!" interrupted Baldwyn; "I'm glad you're able to, Heaven knows! but I don't want any relapses laid at my door. Get your breath again, while I run over the tale of my adventures on the way."

And he went through all the stages of the journey, dilating upon it as much as possible, that the sick man might rest in spite of himself. Wolf was calm presently, and lay watching and listening, his eyes lighted with feeble satisfaction. His friend, studying the pale face as he talked, was aware of a deeper shadow than the shadow of illness circling the quiet gray eyes: it was the signet-mark of sorrow accepted and unacknowledged.

"*Now* you are allowed to speak," he said at the end of his relation; "and I should very much like to know how all this happened, and what sort of care you have had. Why were you not taken back to King's Point, instead of being left in this abandoned place?"

"I can tell you the whole story in few words," said Wolf, speaking easily but low.

"It was a fever, you know. I'm not clear how it seized me: I think my system must have been weakened, and I had some exposure when I was farther up the lake exploring. There was a man with me, an Indian fellow acting as guide. We were on our way back to town in the canoe when I began to notice that something was wrong with me. We came ashore here, and I thought I should be all right again after a night's rest in this little place. Well, next morning I was a fixture on the straw-heap; and my Indian had to go back to town and get somebody to nurse me. I have friends down there, and they sent up every thing that was wanted; for the wretched fever made such headway that they couldn't stir me from here. But I've had as good care as possible under the circumstances. The doctor comes up every little while, and I have a good nurse. And you see how luxuriously they have fixed me up."

Baldywn looked about the room, and nodded in surprised approval. "Yes, you do seem to have been pretty well looked after. Wicker easy-chair, buffalo-skins, medicine-table, fans, fruit — *some*body has been thoughtful of you, my dear boy."

Somebody had been uncommonly thoughtful, and about the smallest details too. A little curtain had been tacked above the rough window, to soften the sunlight for the fever-weakened eyes. Some early green things had been gathered and placed in a dish near the cot-bed; and green branches had been fastened around the fireplace, hiding its rude outlines. A general air of orderliness prevailed: some feminine hand, it was plain, had concerned itself in the fitting-up of this extemporized sick-room.

"Tell me," Wolf said, suddenly beginning to wonder again at the chance that had realized his dreams of this friendly coming, "how did you find out just where I was, and that I was in this forlorn condition? I couldn't bear to send for you, so far away."

"Oh! it was a queer chance. Some friends of ours happened to meet a man who had just returned from here, and he mentioned the fact of your illness. Naturally, as soon as I was told of it, I made arrangements to start. O'Brien packed my bag while I wrote some letters. He saw me off at the station, and sent no end of messages to you, which I don't remember in the least."

"O'Brien? Ah, good old fellow! How is he?"

"Quite as usual. He wanted to come too — was harrowed with anxiety about you — about me: he evidently looked upon me as too frail an anatomy to start alone on a long journey with my mind unsettled. He was as nearly pale as his complexion will admit, when he shook hands with me on the train. He is a friend worth having, Wolf."

"Friends are a better investment than mining stock, John," returned Wolf, gently tapping the other's arm, with the shadow of his whimsical smile. "Bless your familiar old hatchet-face! it's not much thinner than mine now. How good it is to look at! a little change from the 'everlasting hills' out yonder. I don't find fault with them, though — I am on good terms with the hills. They look in at me," he rambled on, turning his eyes to the window, "all the time — so still, so solemn! I sometimes get nervous because they are so solemn: there is a lonesomeness in it. But when the sun is on them, and the bay shines, it is beautiful! See them now, dear boy; see what a depth seems

to lie beyond them — over them — in that distant haze! Their tree-tops are very quiet today; there is not so much wind as usual. It is rest to watch them, Baldwyn — '*ueber den Gipfeln ist Ruh*' " —

"Poor fellow! it must have been monotonous enough, though," his friend said, noting pitifully how his voice had wavered and died away while lingering on the sadly peaceful words. The stimulus of the meeting had lost effect: it was just becoming evident how far the fervor of life had withdrawn itself from him. "I wish I had you in your old room at Clarens House! Never mind: as soon as you are strong enough you shall be got out of this place, and back to where the hills can't throw their shadows over you. We must have patience a little longer, while I am helping you get well."

Wolf's large eyes were turned from the bay, and rested again on his friend with a singular expression, tender yet unsmiling, not sorrowful but calm. Before he spoke, Baldwyn knew what he would say; and an inward shiver protested against the unconcerned smile with which he awaited it.

"Yes, we will have patience, a little longer. '*Warte nur — balde ruhest du — auch!*'" said Wolf, murmuring quietly to himself. And, after a pause, while Baldwyn sat unable to speak, "I shall not get well, John. And it's not" — his eyes wandered off to the hills again with that wearily-calm and far-reaching look — "it's not — of much consequence."

He did not speak with any reckless bitterness, but with a faint quiet that was pathetic and most significant. Baldwyn drew a heavy breath; he had a feeling that here no argument would serve: in truth, he was only too sadly assured that the words were a prophecy. The dog from his remote imprisonment lifted up his voice again — a distressful whiffling, rising now and then into a humanly plaintive wail expressing the lowest depth of canine unhappiness.

"Poor fellow!" said Wolf, listening in languid pity. "It's Hagen, my spaniel. I called him so out of the 'Nibelungen' — in memory of our old joke, you know. But there's nothing treacherous about *him*. He wants me, poor beast! I can't even whistle to him. They tied him out there — to keep him out of the way;

but they can't keep him quiet. I'd have him in now — only he'd tear me to pieces for joy."

Some one spoke to the dog, and hushed him; so that his howling was subdued to a small dejected whimper at intervals.

"But my dear fellow," Baldwyn said, mentally fortifying himself, "I can't allow you, you know, to give up in this way. *I* am here now, you see; and I intend to bring you through all right."

"It will be 'all right' in any case, John," Wolf answered passively. "Since I have been able to think, I have done a good deal of it in this lonesome place. I have seen a great many things — in new ways; and sometimes it seemed as though I were already out of the world — absolutely clear of it. You seem like a link that I had overlooked — between me and the old life — and you know how glad I was to see you; but I should be afraid — I am not strong enough to go back."

A new silence followed, disturbed only by the lake-breeze puffing softly at the little window-curtain.

"How strange it is," added Wolf suddenly,

with an abstracted look, as though speaking of some other than himself, "how wonderful that a man's strength should exhaust itself so soon, so easily! I remember once when I had an accident some years ago sailing on a lake — boat upset; I was very near drowning. But the life in me made such a resistance! You remember Egmont's cry in prison when he realizes his fate? What a rage of impatient anguish in it — '*suesses Leben!*' I felt so then: I fought to live. But now there is none of that. I drift — it's like being on a river, and I drift — drift" —

His eyelids drooped together heavily: he looked very weary and shadow-like. Baldwyn saw that he had talked too much, and rose softly to leave him for a little while. But he looked up again, and put out a protesting hand.

"You are going to stay with me now, aren't you, John? for a while" —

"Indeed I am! I shall have to go back to the town, though, for some things; but I'll be here again as soon as the boat will bring me. You shall have my services as nurse-in-chief. I must go and hail my guide now, and you

would do well to sleep a little. I have tired you out."

As Baldwyn stepped into the little path before the house, thereby rousing poor Hagen's full-throated indignation, he was followed by the woman who had given him such a dubious reception. She had lost the unfriendly air of her first appearance, and looked at him with her dark eyes full of mute questions. As he turned, and waited for her to speak, she said hesitatingly, "How is — what do you think about him, sir?"

"About his recovery, you mean? Oh! I think" — trying to speak as cheerfully as possible — "he is very much weakened, and needs the utmost attention: but careful nurses can work miracles; and I propose to join my efforts to yours at once. You have had the whole care of him through his illness?"

"Yes. I came up from King's Point as soon as I heard of it. He'd rather have had somebody else, I know; and I wouldn't have come if I could have helped it. But there was nobody I would trust: I knew they wouldn't take the care of him that I would. He didn't say any thing to you about me, did he?"

"About you?" repeated Baldwyn, giving her a curious look. "No, he did not. What should he have said about you?"

"I knew he wouldn't," said the woman inattentively, staring past him into the distance. "But I don't care, as long as you didn't bring him any message or — or any thing from anybody."

"But I did," said Baldwyn, extremely mystified; "messages from a gentleman in St. Leon who is an excellent friend of his; and — excuse me, but I can't see why you should object — or what" —

"Or what business it is of mine, any way!" finishing his phrase, with a melancholy, abrupt nod. "Oh, I don't mind *those* messages! And it doesn't seem to be much of my business, sure enough. I'm his wife, that's all."

"*You!* His wife?"

"It isn't strange now, is it, that I'd want to look after him, and keep my eye on folks that come to see him? Look here, sir — I don't know your name, but there's something good in your face — I wasn't very pleasant to you when you came: I couldn't be. Do you know why?"

But she went on without stopping for an answer. "Because I thought you came to try and get him away, or that you came from somebody at a distance, that I hated to think of. Afterwards I found it wasn't so: I listened outside the window. I'd be above that other times, but it's different where he's concerned. I listened as close as I could, and you never told him a word that was hard for me to hear. And if I'd known that in the first place, I'd have — I'd have been better natured to you, you see."

After concluding this attempt at an apology, the woman remained studying his face with an air of furtive humility. Baldwyn did not stir: the sudden surprise held him motionless. With the surprise was mingling a strong feeling of displeasure: he began even to grow indignant at poor feeble Wolf — a sort of uncomprehending anger — as the fact forced itself upon him.

"What did he mean by not telling me?" he wondered wrathfully. "How unjust to the woman, to ignore her so completely! What a return for her faithful service! How unlike my old friend, always so generous!"

Something of this must have found bitter expression in his eyes as he looked fixedly at his companion, or she felt it by instinct.

"Don't you go to blaming him," she cried out imperatively: "don't you do it! You're his friend, and you sha'n't think ill of him. I don't. I must tell you about it."

She began to walk slowly in the direction of the landing, and Baldwyn went on mechanically by her side.

"He was here," she said, "four years ago, spending the summer, looking round the country. He was going on trips all the time, sometimes on foot and sometimes in a boat, and always took a guide along. I used to go out on the bay with folks a good deal, and I went with him now and then. He was very kind, and used to talk to me. I'd always been sort of wild and careless, and never learned any thing but how to manage boats, and do odd jobs for people; but when he happened to say things I didn't understand, I'd go and find out what they meant, and remember it. That used to amuse him. And I learned a good deal that way. I learned too much, you see. Well, one

day he was trying a canoe out on the bay, near King's Point — a little birch-bark thing — and there was nobody with him, nor in sight, except me on the landing. I saw him go away out ever so far; and then the canoe upset somehow — he was careless — and he went under. I knew he could swim, but I took a boat and rowed as fast as I could — and I was only just in time, for he took a chill, and was sinking when I got to him, and pulled him out: and he was grateful to me; and, when he got over the chill, he said he wanted to give me something to show his gratitude; but not money — he wouldn't offer me that — it was himself he asked me to take. He said I had a claim on his life, because I'd saved it. He used to like me then, I thought, because he always seemed so kind, and pleased to talk to me" —

("Oh, oh!" groaned Baldwyn in his mind, "how many more experienced women have thought the same thing, I wonder?")

"— And but for that, for his own sake, I never would have done it — oh, I never would!"

"Nevertheless, you *did* do it?"

"Yes, I did. I believe now he was sorry

almost as soon as he asked me, when he fairly came to think of it; but he wouldn't show it, nor go back from his word: and we went to the justice and were married that very week. And it was all my fault — all — for I *did* know I wasn't fit for him; and I never expected he would stay here, nor take me away with him among people. You see, I'm only good to work with my hands, and take care of sick folks: I'm ignorant, and shouldn't do in the places he's used to. But oh, I never thought of the drag and worry it would be to him! and I tell you, if it would do any good now, and wasn't a wicked thing to think of, I'd row out on the lake, and — and never come back!"

The woman's strong dark eyes shone, and the deep color of earnestness rose in her brown cheeks. Baldwyn felt a stir of sympathy and admiration, and also an abashed consciousness that here was a generosity of devotion beyond his poor friend's deserts.

"But he can't have been so — you weren't left here to look out for yourself, without any resources, Mrs. —" He hesitated, reluctant after all to give this obviously unpolished per-

son the name that had always been so choice with him.

"My name is Nell," the woman said shortly. "Resources? Why, for the matter of that, I'm able to take care of myself, as I've always done. But he was very good about it, and made me take money that I never used and didn't need. I wouldn't like to use his money, somehow. I wouldn't feel as if I'd any right to it, as long as I could earn enough myself; and it doesn't take very much to keep me. Only the second week after we were married, he got a telegram from somewhere East. It was some business that wanted him back there right away. He had to go, you see; and of course he couldn't take me too. He said he would come back by and by, and he told me where to write for more money. I never did, though: I didn't want it. He was always very good and gentle —you know his way — and I knew he felt sorry for me as well as himself; but he was glad to go."

What a sad, sad look in the rude dark face as she told out her cheerless little romance!

"And he wrote to me once in a while — kind

letters" — (Baldwyn noticed that her hand went up unconsciously to her heart, as though some treasure lay near it — poor meagre treasure of well-worn paper!) — "and two months ago he came back, after I'd got to think I never should see him again. I almost wish I never had, for it's a great deal of wretchedness I got out of his coming. He didn't want to see me — I could tell that; and there was a heavy kind of discouraged look in his eyes. He was restless, and off about country most of the time; till the first I heard he was down here with a fever, and somebody was wanted for nurse. And I came. And very soon I found out what it was that I saw in his eyes: there's some one — back where you come from — that he's thinking about all the time; some one that he" —

"Hush!" Baldwyn broke out forcibly. "Hush! don't say it: you must not say that!"

"Ah — h! you knew it, then: you know her!" said the woman, fixing her strong black eyes suddenly on his face. Baldwyn felt a discomfort, as though some hidden thoughts of his own had gone out of his keeping under the quick questioning gaze. "Well, no matter: I

don't want to know any thing about it, more than I do. There was a ribbon in his pocket — a bit of red ribbon — among his papers, round a scrap of writing that I couldn't make out. I let it stay where I found it. It told the story well enough — as well as if he hadn't talked in his fever."

"He talked in his fever? What did he say?"

"Ravings, mostly — nothing sensible: only one name he said over and over, and talked to it, till I know it as well as I know my own" —

"Will you forget it?" Baldwyn asked earnestly: "will you try, for his sake and for all our sakes, to forget it, and any thing else he may have said, in those dreadful wanderings?"

"Ah, no! I can't do that," she answered gloomily: "I never shall forget it: but I can keep it to myself. Do you think I should want to do any thing else?"

There was silence again for a moment, in which the two looked straight before each other with the blank stare of sorrowful abstraction. The woman moved first.

"He is alone," she said, "all this time! I

hope he has fallen asleep: I haven't left him so long before. Tell me now that you see he isn't to blame for any thing, and that it isn't strange he didn't tell you; and he can't help a little hard feeling at me, since I'm the cause of all his trouble!"

"Ah, there's a very soft spot in my heart for the poor fellow! Don't fear — I sha'n't judge him any too severely; and however indignant I might feel against him, it would all melt away very soon before his weakness. You are a good soul — you are an amazing woman! Go to him now — I must be off — you'll see me back shortly. And look here" — he touched her arm kindly as she was moving away — "you don't need to distrust me."

The woman, turning her steps toward the cabin, threw back at him a look — almost a smile — that quite changed her face, it was so full of bright, comprehending gratitude, and needed no accompanying words.

Baldwyn walked on toward the bay, only half conscious of his movement. The oarsman had gone to sleep somewhere about: he was glad of that, so that he might stop and think a moment

alone. His heart swelled as it all rose before him: he knew so well now how it had come about. He recognized well the swift impulse of high-strung chivalry, the unreflecting generosity, never more mistaken, that were always characteristic of the poor boyish fellow now lying in there so broken and passive. Poor fellow! how soon he must have realized, and how sorely repented, the miserable error!

And the three lives — oh the three lives so darkly clouded, beyond any earthly brightening! What end was ordered through it all? Baldwyn, so pondering, felt as if the weight of pity were more than he could bear.

"Poor Wolf! my poor Wolf!" he muttered over and over. And then he was sensible of some bitterness for himself underlying that compassion.

How often, when we say "poor fellow!" and sigh tenderly over the story of some saddened mortal, it is only ourselves we are pitying — only some covert sorrow of our own that stirs, and sends to our eyes the tears which we call tears of sympathy! After all, Self lies at the bottom of even our best emotions. And Bald-

wyn was not so very selfish a man. Perhaps, as he thought of all the love spent vainly on his unfortunate friend, it occurred to him to wonder that a little of it could not have fallen to his own share — only a little: it would have been so much more to him than any good he might have won from the grudging world! But his thoughts all drifted back directly to the old point — "poor Wolf! poor Wolf!" — and the wind, sweeping along the shore, seemed to whisper it back in a solemn undertone: it was the dreariest wind-voice he had ever listened to.

Alec the boatman sprang up presently from somewhere along the waterside, and came sauntering on with easy strides, hands in his pockets. He looked perfectly happy and unmoved; a brown, stolid, but not uncomely child of the lakes: his stubby clay pipe sent up cheerful curls of smoke around its fellow pipes decorating the band of his huge head-covering. Baldwyn looked at him a moment as he approached; then moved with a short sigh, and followed him to the boat.

"We must make good time, Alec," was all

he said, as they shot away from land. He had no desire for conversation now: he was watching the lapping water, and thinking that, in all his long talk with Wolf, they had not once spoken the name of Charlotte.

CHAPTER XX.

FAREWELL TO THE PINES.

Earnest activity, believe me, always reconciles one with life at last.
— RICHTER: *Titan.*

IT was a bright, chilly day, less like spring than autumn, on which Baldwyn left King's Point. He had staid close by his friend during the short week or two that remained; and he had left him sleeping the solemn sleep under the hillside pines that had so long "thrown their shadows over him."

Every thing had been done in accordance with Wolf's desire, even to the choice of this beautiful but lonely place of rest. He had spoken but once of Nell, and that was in presence of the King's Point lawyer, who was instructed to secure to her all her husband's property, with the exception of some small bequests to Baldwyn and others. Hagen the

spaniel was one of the minor legacies; the poor dog had become reconciled to his future master after some persistent coaxing: he had gone with them to the grave under the pines; and, when it was covered over and they turned away, he seemed to realize his dependence on the new friend, and trotted quietly but dejectedly by his side.

As for Baldwyn, he had had more than one sad experience in his day; but he seldom indeed had felt a heavier sorrow than weighed him down when he walked for the last time to the landing, leaving behind the empty cabin with closed door, more forlorn of aspect even than before these few lives had made their temporary halt in its rough shelter.

Alas! it was not only upon poor Wolf that the melancholy pines had cast their shadow. They darkened the clear day for Baldwyn, standing silent on the pier at King's Point, watching with a blank pale face the stir about the little steamer which would presently carry him away southward. He stood as quiet as a statue, lost in the painful thoughts that drew great furrows between his eyebrows, till a yelp and sudden

rush of Hagen from his side made him turn about quickly. The spaniel was at the other end of the wharf, giving the most joyful welcome to a woman wrapped in shawls, hurrying out from land.

It was Nell. She bent down and put her arms around the dog for a moment, and then hastened on toward his master. She looked quite white in her black dress; and marks of weariness showed for the first time about her great grave eyes. But in spite of that, there was a happier look in her face than had been there for many days.

"I wanted to come and say good-by to you," she said, holding out her hand, "the last of all; because I shall never see you again. And to thank you once more," she continued, in a soft steady voice — it had softened perceptibly in those few weeks — "for all you have done, and for being so good to me."

Baldwyn wondered here, as he had often wondered before, at the trick of language that she had caught — the refining change that was wrought upon her manner, and had been working gradually, even within his brief time of

observation. Poor Nell! it was almost the only schooling she ever had.

"I am glad you came to see me off," Baldwyn said cordially. "Sad as a departure may be, it is always cheering to see a friendly hand waving good-by! There is no need that you should thank me. I only wish there were something more that I could do for you. Are you sure there is not?"

"Quite sure," Nell answered. "I would be easier if you could take all that money away, as I told you. But since you will not, and after what you said about it, I will call it mine, so that I can put it to some good use. There is a great deal that can be done with it about here, and I should like to help people. It's of no other value to me, you know."

"Indeed, if any thing can make you happy, that will!" Baldwyn said sympathetically. "There is a prospect of contentment for you, at least. I am heartily glad to leave you with that feeling, and I want you to be sure of my earnest interest and friendship so long as we live. Always send to me if you need advice, or any thing else that I can give you. Will you agree to do that?"

"Thank you!" Nell said again, her heavy eyes brightening a little. "Yes, I will, surely. But I am not anxious about myself at all. And — you will take good care of poor Hagen, I know. — Poor fellow, he will forget all about me soon!"

"What a fool I was," Baldwyn burst out, with a sudden idea, "to think of taking him away with me! Why, he ought to belong to you, of course! Here, take him, and keep him: he is as fond of you as he is of me, and he will be something of a comfort to you. Hagen, stay with your mistress: do you hear, sir?"

But Nell turned gently away from her brown pet, shaking her head with decision.

"No," she said: "it was not meant so. I want every thing done just as he wished it — and the dog was left to you. You must take him, please: it is just as well for me. I think they are nearly ready to start, sir: shall you go on board now?"

Then in a few minutes it was all over; the water was foaming; and Baldwyn stood on the cramped little deck with Hagen, taking his

last look at the fateful shores. Distinct above every thing he saw Nell's lessening figure in its black garments, but with a smile on its face, waving at him the friendly hand so long as he could discern it. And then, moving his eyes along the far-off shore-line, he saw against a cloudless sky the masses of the hills, and their slopes furred over with the outlines of distant pines — the very ones that held mysterious watch around so calm, untroubled a slumberer. But out there upon the lake their shadows were not long enough to reach; the flicker of the glittering water seemed to defy all sombre visions of misfortune, of unmeant injury, and of expiation: and above every thing, the picture of strong patient peace in that face upon the shore rose supreme, a grateful memory.

For the boat was so far away now that he could distinguish nothing but a dim black form; yet even with closed eyes he saw the steady face, watching.

CHAPTER XXI.

A VISION.

O puissance du temps! o légères années!
Vous emportez nos pleurs, nos cris et nos regrets;
Mais la pitié vous prend, et sur nos fleurs fanées
Vous ne marchez jamais!

—De Musset.

TRAVELLING may perhaps prove, for some constitutions, as in the case of Oswald, Lord Nelvil, "one of the saddest pleasures in life;" but with Baldwyn, who found himself after his double loss quite as life-weary as that bereaved nobleman, a change of country seemed the only thing endurable.

Hagen was his companion across the ocean. They went, almost without stopping, straight over to the continent; but Baldwyn did not linger in France. His unhappy soul urged him from land to land; he took up eagerly the sad habit of visiting places where he had journeyed

with Wolf in their *cameraden* days; he went to their university town, and sailed down the river, with his arm around Hagen's silky neck. A year — two years — slipped away in these objectless wanderings. He was stronger in health, and his peace of mind was gradually returning. He went back to England, where he had many friends: after a week or so of their society, he was rather surprised to find that the ancient charm still lurked about fox-hunting and salmon-fishing excursions over the border.

In the third year, as he was beginning to think about home again, a pretty English Clara smiled at him among the Durham glades; and — he decided on another year in the Old World. And then it happened that in those spring months he returned in his steps for the second time, but on this occasion with a feminine shawl upon his arm, and the rosy face of its owner by his side. Clara was an amiable, cheery creature, flaxen-haired, with eyes as blue as the English sky over-arching the country-house where they were married.

"It is the season for Italy," she said, when they planned their bridal-tour. "Might we go to Italy?"

So they went, of course, and lost themselves among the lakes and palaces of fairyland for a month; and then loitered through the Grisons and the Tyrol up toward Munich. The summer was idled away charmingly in Germany, Baldwyn choosing a different route from his previous one. And when autumn came, and they took their way into France again, there lay the fair gardens of Armida before them on the curling Seine; and Clara insisted that they should stop for a brief sip from the magic goblet. Her husband said dissuasively that "an English daisy would wilt in that feverish ballroom atmosphere;" but the "daisy" was determined, so on they rode to Paris. Clara was fresh and young, and full of delight at the brilliancy of the volatile city; and for Baldwyn — world-fatigued man, feeling a sort of middle-aged calmness, even in his bridal days — there was a novel pleasure in watching her ecstasies, and sometimes igniting from a spark of her enthusiasm. She made a point of being taken everywhere, and her husband was promptly obedient to all her suggestions. As a kind of intermezzo to the rounds of galleries, monu-

ments and arcades, they occasionally took a *voiture de remise*, and spent a day somewhat bourgeois fashion in one of the lovely parks or gardens beyond the fortifications.

One morning, previous to such an excursion, they had been visiting some stores for the purpose of renewing their tourists' equipment, and having come out into the air again, stopped in a doorway to discuss the question of further investments. Baldwyn was feeling younger and more alert than he had for years, under the influence of his wife's animated chatter: and teased her, quite with his old manner — which was new to her — as he stood duteously holding her purchases. Seeing that after a moment she stopped herself and began to gaze abstractedly, in the middle of a sentence, he followed the direction of her blue eyes and found them intent upon a carriage slowly drawing up by the sidewalk.

It was a carriage such as may be used to convey the sisterhood to and from their institutions; and in it sat a sister in her conventional dress, with a child perched on the seat beside her. It might be rather an infrequent sight;

but there was nothing about it to make a man feel as though his heart had suddenly turned over, and ceased its action. A sister was nothing so uncommon, in France at least; and this one had not certainly any thing startling in her aspect. She sat with drooped eyelids, not wearing the look of forced self-communion so often seen under the conventual head-dress, but merely as one lost in quiet thought. The child beside her — a round, sleepy-faced girl — was nestling up close, and leaning her small bonnet against the sister's black-draped arm, as though it were a natural resting-place for little orphaned heads. The two were perhaps carrying completed work to some establishment, after their custom; for the little girl's chubby hands were clutching a number of small bundles, and the sister held a lapful of packages. They were white hands, and a trifle thin, that steadied the parcels on the black-shrouded knees; and yet Baldwyn remembered how there had been dimples on them once, and how they used to show olive-tinted against the white piano-keys.

It was quite as well that Clara, attracted by the couple in the carriage, watched them stead-

ily, unmindful of her husband's face, unaware of the strong surge of memory in his heart. His eyes glistened with tears of which he was perfectly unconscious, as he studied the tranquil features and saw them grow more familiar each instant. He wished he had been alone, that he might seize a chance and speak to her — he would have risked that, though he did not know whether it would be allowable or not, by the rules of the sisterhood. At the same time he wondered what she would think if she looked up suddenly and saw him. He hoped for that, though he was ill at ease awaiting it. He was conscious of an absence of the heroic element in thus standing face to face with the devoted Past, side by side with the contradictory Present. For Baldwyn, it must be confessed, was an odd man ; and having somehow conceived the eccentric idea that a man's heart, once given out of his keeping, should under no circumstances be reclaimed and made to do duty at second-hand, as it were, in other quarters, had clung to that quixotic maxim for many years, and — only admitted an exception in his own case.

Gratefully as Clara's gentle personality had

stolen into his life, he felt that a phantom of greater power than her living presence had stepped back out of the old years before his saddened eyes. Was it wrong? But it was unalterable: he did not even make the mental reflection that at no time, and to no human being, had he ever spoken his secret — it was enough that he himself knew it — and, more than that, he knew that Charlotte, with her fine, sympathetic instinct, had learned it long ago, and been grateful for the silent renunciation. How would she look now on his new position? — would she think he had found it a simple thing to put aside the shrivelled flowers of the past, and turn smiling to the fresh ones springing before him? That was hardest of all, that she could not know — no one could know, and least of all, surely, that placid, pale-faced sister — where he had stored the crumbling relics, and how often he went by himself to breathe mournfully their subtle, withered sweetness.

There was some obstruction ahead of the carriage; so that the driver could not, it seemed, reach the desired entrance. The pair inside began gathering their bundles, and preparing to alight.

"John, what an interesting face that sister of charity has, do you notice? There is always something so romantic to me about those sisters: how fond the child seems of her! There, she has dropped one of her packages — quick, John — get it for her!"

Baldwyn started forward mechanically, and obeyed: the sister, still taking out parcels from the carriage, turned toward him with a slight movement of thanks, and looked into his eyes. Had she seen him before? was she prepared? or had the new life so inwrapped her nervous nature that no shock of outer chance could stir its charmed serenity? For there was no change in the calm, faint-colored oval of her face, no startled lifting of eyelids, though he knew that she had recognized him. He stepped back, not daring to speak. As she passed in the next moment, guiding her little companion, she glanced round upon him with eyes full of infinite and gentle expression, as if trying to answer the silent questions swarming in his own, and laid her hand lightly on the child's head, with a gesture as comprehensive as her earnest look. But, as she passed by Clara, she

suddenly bent upon her a smile so beautiful and kindly in its significance that it was like a transfiguring; the cheeks seemed to grow rounder and younger; the eyes to shine, though with softened brightness; and the face of Charlotte looked from its dark framework for an instant — only for an instant — and she was gone.

"O John, what a smile! Did you see it? How odd! I didn't know the sisters were allowed to smile. Why, she looked at you too, almost as though she knew you! Did you ever see her before, John?"

"The sister? — No — I never saw her before," said Baldwyn absently.

He looked after the couple, as they passed on toward a side-entrance farther down the street. The child stopped their progress at the doorstep for a moment, crouching to gather up a few waifs of flowers scattered on the stones by some careless hand; and the sister waited, looking down upon it with the mild patience in her face melting into another of those bright, transforming smiles. The shifting clouds overhead gave way for a time to subdued sunlight, centering, Baldwyn fancied, about those two

figures like a happy symbol. So that the last view he had of the well-remembered face, as it turned and went from his sight, showed him the old smile, as bright as Hope, as lasting as Memory, touching him with its mystic peace like a benediction, and leaving no room for regret, no excuse for sighing retrospect.

"They must be happy orphans who have that sister to take care of them," Clara observed, the pleased wonder still lingering in her blue eyes.

Baldwyn had a similar thought, but held his peace. He would perhaps have told his wife the story of the sister; but in a moment he felt that it was impossible — too much of it was inwoven with his own life — it was not to be handled like a novelette — "to what good?" he asked himself.

And so this final episode was laid away among the other treasures of the little hidden chamber; and the door was shut and sealed for all time upon their fragrant rest.

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